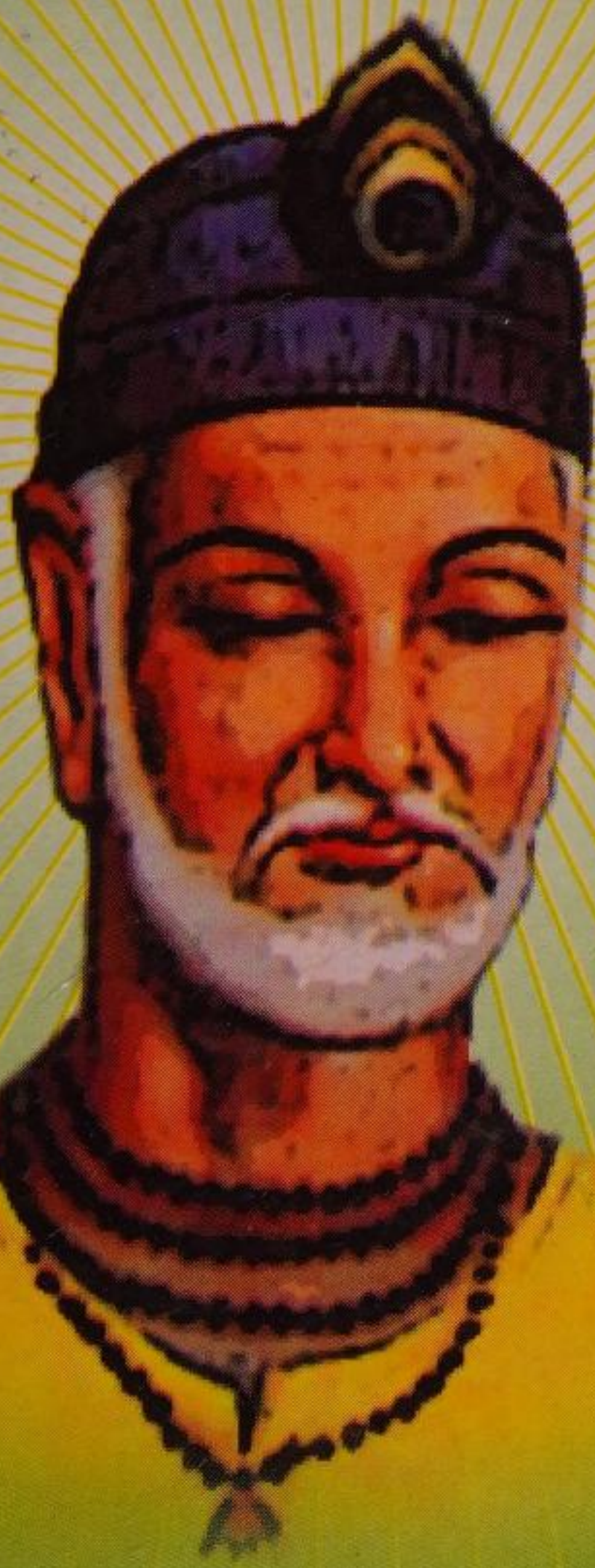
Kabir

THE APOSTLE OF HINDU-MUSLIM UNITY



MUHAMMAD HEDAYETULLAH

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Kabir :
The Apostle of
Hindu-Muslim Unity

Kabir :
The Apostle of Hindu-Muslim Unity

Interaction of Hindu-Muslim Ideas in the Formation of the Bhakti Movement with Special Reference to Kabīr, the Bhakta

MUHAMMAD HEDAYETULLAH

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To
My Parents

FOREWORD

The fundamental fact that must immediately impress itself on every observer of religious life in India is the existence of two great religious communities in the sub-continent, Islam and Hinduism. These two have been juxtaposed in a position of rivalry for the commitment of the Indian population since the major advent of the Muslims into the sub-continent in the 11th century. So important has the confrontation between them been that for many historians and ideologues in recent times it has stood out as the single most important factor contributing to the modern formation of the region. To nationalist historians and writers on both sides the emergence of two states, India and Pakistan, in the area in 1947, after almost a century of political debate and struggle that was complicated by the presence of British colonial authority, has seemed the logical and almost inevitable outcome of this confrontation. If through the centuries on the Hindu side there has appeared a greater capability to accommodate alien and irruptive religious modes within its structure, this has normally been at the price of Hinduizing these alien influences and absorbing them within a wider framework that ultimately robs them of their identity; while on the Islamic side adoption of local customs and mixture with local populations in the various areas where Islam penetrated, both outside India as well as inside, have never been able to break down the Muslim sense of being a separate community, the best of communities. In the early days of the confrontation of the two groups on Indian soil the sense of difference was exacerbated by the superior social position of Muslims as the conquering ruling power; in more recent times this obstacle to a sense of unity among all the inhabitants of the area has been replaced by the fear of domination of one community over the other and the struggle for relative advantage in a post-colonial autonomous society. Though there has undoubtedly been some meeting and intermingling of the two communities, especially at the level of the life of common people, the great distinction yet remains. To many it appears

not only that a fundamental accommodation will never take place but even that none should be sought for.

The present volume rejects and attacks this commonly held view of Indian history by arguing not only that accommodation between the two communities is possible but that it actually occurred in a significant way in mediaeval India with the rise of bhakti religion. The principal focus of the volume is the study of one representative of this type of religious outlook, Kabīr, the founder and patron of the continuing group known as the Kabīr Panthīs. Kabīr is not studied for himself alone, however, but as an instance of a wider and fundamentally important process, that of Hindu-Muslim interaction. The key to Kabīr's life and thought, according to Professor Hedayetullah, is his refusal to be bound by the symbol system of a particular religious community and his insistence upon penetrating beyond the superficial expressions of piety to the experience that lies behind. This approach prevented him in his poetry from characterizing himself as either a Hindu or a Muslim, and led him instead to claim to be a worshipper of both Rāma and of Allah. In Kabīr's eyes the name attached to the deity whom one worships is only a linguistic convenience; the matter of substance is that there is but a single God with whom the worshipper should seek a relationship of intimate love. Such a relationship constitutes the heart of true religion and necessarily lifts one above the limits of any sectarian or community identification into the realm of the spirit. Kabīr thus is presented as perhaps the unique leader in the sub-continent's long and chequered history to have brought the two most basic religious outlooks found there into a position of mutual adaptation and interaction. Professor Hedayetullah is at pains to emphasize that he believes this adaptation and interaction to have been mutual and not one-sided only, with each religion exerting a profound influence on the life and practice of the other. The adaptation is worthy of study and of enduring significance precisely because it did occur in the sphere of religion, and despite the glaring and basic differences between Islam and Hinduism. Although much greater attention is given to showing the possible channels of Islamic influence on mediaeval Hinduism than *vice versa*, the broad argument is made that each group affected and influenced the

other in ways that transformed the other and made the Indian scene different because of their mutual contact. Bhakti and Kabīr as its greatest representative are depicted as the children of the Hindu-Muslim marriage.

This volume thus presents Kabīr as the first overt proclaimer of Hindu-Muslim unity, a unity that is achieved by the assumption of both outlooks into a higher religious reality. The net effect of his teaching was to break down the barriers of Islamic theological dogmatism on the one hand and the barriers of Hindu social exclusivism and caste discrimination on the other. Unlike other observers who describe Kabīr as a syncretist who attempted to combine fundamentally incompatible teachings into a single system in an arbitrary and undigested fashion, Professor Hedayetullah holds that Kabīr brought the two points of view into an integral relationship in his system of thought by refusing both completely to denounce or completely to uphold either. Instead, from a higher perspective he sought to demonstrate that both possess the elements of genuine religiousness and that by focusing the attention upon these elements the way is opened to a kind of piety which transcends their differences.

The assumption which underlies this argument for the actual mutual accommodation of Islam and Hinduism is that of the fundamental similarity of mysticism in all religious contexts, temporal, historical and geographical. Professor Hedayetullah takes for granted the universal homogeneity of mysticism, which as he rightly says is professed by many eminent scholars, without entering into a detailed discussion of this difficult subject. Kabīr was essentially a mystic who developed a piety centering upon love of the deity. His mysticism provided the categories that allowed him to draw Hinduism and Islam within the bounds of a single system. Because Islam had already developed sophisticated mystical experience, theory, and practice before its decisive entrance into the sub-continent, those elements were present in the Islamic background which provided positive affinity with Hindu mystical systems that date from prehistory. The result in leaders such as Rāmānanda and Kabīr was a neo-religious approach, bhakti, having something of the heritage of both Hindu and Islamic

mystical piety in its ancestry. So far as Kabīr is concerned, therefore, the key to his thinking and his achievement is to be found in Ṣūfism and its relationship, in terms of similarity or difference, with the various types of mysticism seen in the Hindu community. Not surprisingly a great deal of the present volume is taken up with thè description of Ṣūfism and the lives of its great exemplars both inside India and outside. The necessity to establish the fundamental similarities that form the key premise of Professor Hedayetullah's argument has led him very far afield from the strict history of mediaeval India and has immensely complicated his task. The judgment that one may reach concerning his success in capturing the heart of a phenomenon, Ṣūfism, which is far from having been adequately studied, is likely to influence the reader's attitude towards the argument of the book as a whole. One must, however, applaud his courage in tackling a subject that has defied the best efforts of so many others.

In spite of the central place that mysticism occupies in the mutual influence and interaction of Hinduism and Islam, Professor Hedayetullah is also insistent that the interaction and influence he is seeking to document extend to other realms of religious life as well. It is not only the bī-sharcī Ṣūfīs, he tells us, who were able to accommodate themselves to the views of Hindus and *vice versa* and to provide the ground for a synthesizing effort such as Kabīr's. The modification is also alleged to have occurred in what may be called the "orthodox" segments of the two communities. Professor Hedayetullah does not develop this provocative assertion or provide as much documentation as one would like to support it. It would seem, however, a vital point if the general thesis of Hindu-Muslim accommodation, both its possibility and its actuality, is to be sustained. Hopefully in some future work Professor Hedayetullah will share his insights into this matter with the scholarly public.

This book which reviews the life and achievements of an important mediaeval religious figure whose influence continues down to our own day is very much to be welcomed. Not only does it offer an interpretation of the work and life of Kabīr, thus making a substantial contribution to our knowledge of the history of religions, but more importantly it invites a renewed

consideration of the religious foundations of the Hindu-Muslim relationship and of the operative elements in that relationship. The thrust of its argument is interesting both because it goes against the grain of most contemporary opinion and because, could the argument be conclusively proven, it offers a possible approach to the solution of a problem that has brought untold misery to the Indian sub-continent. The author has earned our gratitude for bringing these matters to our attention for setting the stage for further debate.

McGill University
Montreal
Sept. 1977

C. J. ADAMS
Director,
Institute of Islamic Studies

PREFACE

For quite a long time, I have been interested in making a study of the Hindu-Muslim relation in India in its historical and religious perspectives. When I had the opportunity to peruse a few books on this subject, I became convinced that the history of the relationship between Indian ideas and those of Islām con be traced, even outside India, as far back as the seventh century of the Christian Era. I became especially interested in studying this subject in the Indian context. Having made further investigation, I discovered that at about the same time the process of interaction and assimilation between Hindu and Muslim ideas, customs, manners, etc. had started in South India. The process of the interaction between the two faiths and the two communities began with the coming of the Arab Muslim trader-missionaries to the West and the South-western coasts of India. This trend eventually led to the upsurge of a mass religious movement — the Bhakti Movement.

The Bhakti Movement — a religion of devotion — is a combination of the efforts of Hindu and Muslim mystics who, in their highest spirituality, transcended all distinctions between man and man religiously as well as socially. The religious message of these *bhaktas* or the great souls of God was characterised by such universality that their message was accepted by Hindus and Muslims equally. Also, the rank and file of their disciples was swelled by Hindus and Muslims indiscriminately. In other words, the Bhakti Movement created an atmosphere of harmony and concord in the religious life of medieval India.

One of these '*ābids* was Kabīr, a Muslim weaver of Banares. He was a unique person in every respect — in his upbringing, teaching and mission. He was not only a true product of the interaction of Hindu-Muslim ideas, but also a sincere ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity. By preaching a new spirituality, he not only disregarded the formal religions of Hinduism and Islām, which he considered merely man-made, he also struggled to unite the two communities by a new piety which would not discriminate between them either religiously or socially.

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INTRODUCTION

The interaction between Hindu and Muslim ideas in India took place over a period of several centuries. The two cultures met on various levels, such as intellectual, commercial, political and religious. On each of these levels, the two religions influenced each other, sometimes peripherally, sometimes deeply. The most important of these levels for this study was the religious. In spite of their very basic differences, the two traditions were forced by circumstances into some kind of interaction even on the orthodox level. However, the point at which the two religious traditions had something in common was mysitcism, and both traditions produced non-orthodox mytsics who could hardly be distinguished from one another. The system which expresses the culmination of their interaction is called *Bhakti* Mysticism.

The interaction of Hindu-Muslim ideas through *bhakti* mysticism produced a number of great mystics in India during the medieval period. The characteristic feature of these *bhakta*-mystics was that by no orthodox criterion could they be identified as purely Hindu or Muslim. They were the whole-hearted *sādhakas* of One God; they found no distinction between man and man, such as Hindu and Muslim; and they considered so-called religious observances, rites and ceremonies as useless for actual spiritual progress. In short, the type of *bhakti* mysticism which these *sādhakas* formulated and propagated was a simple religion of devotion (*bhakti*) to God which required no outward performance of what are called religious duties, but needed only a pure heart and a sense of absolute surrender to a beloved God. As these *bhaktas* considered themselves whole-hearted lovers of God, the essence of their religion was love for God.

The greatest of all these mystics, who were products of an environment engendered by the interaction of the two faiths, was Kabīr of Banares, North India. Kabīr occupies a unique position in the history of Indian national heroes, for he is one of the few figures to emerge from the history of Indian religion

during the medieval period. Kabīr's greatness lies primarily in his sustained efforts to unite the Hindus and the Muslims who had been antagonistic to one another for centuries. Kabīr came to realise that the quarrels between Hindus and the Muslims were based fundamentally on religion. And it was religious prejudice and bias which prevented the two communities from developing a sense of unity and harmony, even though they were living together in the same society. Therefore, in order to achieve his mission, Kabīr overtly denounced both Hinduism and Islām. According to him, the traditional form of Hinduism as well as of Islām was only a creation of Hindus and Muslims themselves, for, he maintained, the One God, Allāh or Rāma, has created only one human race without making any distinction between man and man. Correlative to this basic idea, Kabīr argued that since there is One God, regardless of the different names used for Him, and one human race, there could not be many religions. By breaking down all denominational differences based on religion, Kabīr tried to formulate a new religion, rather a new piety or a new spirituality, consisting of good elements from both Hinduism and Islām. That religion, primarily based on *bhakti*, Kabīr hoped would be acceptable to both Hindus and Muslims.

In connection with Kabīr's mission, the most significant point to remember is that in his striving to unite the Hindus and the Muslims under the fold of one religion, he consistently kept himself above all religious denominations. In this, he never identified himself as a Hindu or as a Muslim. The only available evidence of his identification is that of a "weaver of Benares." Thus, having kept himself above the level of Hindu-Muslim religious categories, Kabīr found himself justified in denouncing both Hinduism and Islām with equal severity. He maintained perfect neutrality and showed no soft heart or preference to either religion. Kabīr's distaste for sectarianism can also be seen in the fact that, unlike many *bhaktas*, he refused to organise any sect of his own followers. His understanding of one human race and a universal brotherhood of human beings prompted him not only to reject and denounce the Hindu caste system, and all sectarianism that was fostered

by either Hindus or the Muslims, but also to refuse to constitute a sect of his own followers.

Kabīr's effort to unite the Hindus and the Muslims on one religio-social platform was crowned with success, at least during his lifetime. But immediately after his death, his followers split up into two separate camps — Hindu and Muslim — thus pulling down the entire structure for which Kabīr had struggled so hard. The Kabīr-panthīs quickly departed from the ideals of Kabīr. The Kabīr-panthīs built up their own sectarian tradition in spite of Kabīr's warnings, and produced a galaxy of literature in the name of Kabīr. The history of the Kabīr-panthīs falls outside the scope of this work.

In spite of his good intentions, Kabīr was misunderstood by people both during his lifetime and after his death. His strange ideas puzzled people at home and created enemies outside. His mother and his wife rebuked him for his involvement in matters of religion, which, they thought, was the business of Brāhmans and Mullāhs. Being a member of a Muslim family, his utterance of the name of the Hindu God, Rāma, embarassed his parents and his wife.

Outside his family, the Brāhmans and the Mullāhs raised a hue and cry against Kabīr's ideas. First of all, his denunciation of the sanctified position claimed by those so-called guardians of religion engendered open hostility against him. Second, both Hindu and Muslim religious personages found it impossible to tolerate the authority of a low-caste man like Kabīr speaking on religious matters. Third, Kabīr's overt rejection of both traditional Hinduism and Islām, his preaching of the idea of one religion for the people of India, and his ignoring the distinction that is implied by names like Allāh and Rāma, were considered sacrilege by orthodox Hindus and Muslims. According to the legends, these enemies tried to get him penalised by the Muslim administration of that time.

When Kabīr died his Muslim and Hindu followers quarreled over his corpse and have continued to quarrel ever since. As a result the history of his life has been greatly distorted, with the record being so obscured that some writers have even doubted the existence of Kabīr. Others, while not hesitating to

accept the fact that Kabīr was an actual human being, find it difficult to agree on what his true teaching was. Some of these writers try to treat Kabīr as a Hindu, while others attempt to see him exclusively as a Muslim Ṣūfī.

Where are we to find reliable information concerning Kabīr's life and teaching ? To begin with, the *Bijak* (invoice) is taken as the treasurehouse for Kabīr's teaching. However, it must be admitted that even *Bijak* does not contain every word of Kabīr. It was compiled by his disciples long after his death. Naturally, the possibility of additions to Kabīr's original sayings cannot be ruled out completely. Although facts and legends are mixed up through the ages, it is not altogether impossible to sift the genuine sayings of Kabīr from the apocryphal within the *Bijak*. By a study of Kabīr's sayings as recorded in the *Bijak*, we are able to see that there is a kind of single line of thought, though it is far from being logically consistent.

The second source for information concerning Kabīr's life and teaching is the *Ādi Granth*, the religious scripture of Sikhism. The sayings of Kabīr occupy a considerable portion of this scripture. The status given to Kabīr's sayings in the *Ādi Granth* (or the *Granth Sāhib*) is taken as a testimony to the authenticity of his sayings. However, as in the case of the *Bijak*, some additions and modifications can also be expected in the *Adi Granth*. A small number of Kabīr's sayings are found both in the *Bijak* and in the *Ādi Granth*, with slight difference in phrasing. This discrepancy is probably due to two oral traditions which served as kernel for the formation of the two scriptures.

In addition to these contemporary and near contemporary sources, the *One Hundred Poems of Kabir* by Rabindranāth Tagore also provides some reflections of Kabīr's teaching. Besides these, some information regarding Kabīr's life and teaching can be gleaned from secular sources. These evidences are carefully collected in the *Indian National Biography Series : Kabir*, and other standard history books. In this work we will rely on both the scriptural and the secular sources. A careful study of all information as collected from these sources will help us to form a fairly correct view about Kabīr's life and teaching.

On the basis of this historical information, we hope to find some keys by which to reinterpret Kabīr's sayings in the light of their historical perspective. Our main objective will be not so much to give new information as to reinterpret the information already at our disposal and to argue that Kabīr's thought was the product of the interaction of Hindu-Muslim ideas in *bhakti* mysticism. Secondly, we wish to show how Kabīr tried to bind the Hindus and the Muslims together with a single religio-social rope and thereby resolve the historical tension extant between them. We will argue that in order to achieve this goal he consistently kept himself above Hindu-Muslim sectarian identification.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PRINTED BOOKS

AI	Al'beruni's India, Sachau, E. C. S. Chand & Co, Delhi, 1964.
AMMI	Al-Hallaj-Martyr Mystique de l'Islam, Massignon, L, Paris 1922, I.
ARPI	Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India, during the Thirteenth Century, Nizami, K.A.
AS	The Aphorisms of Śāṇḍilya, Cowell, E. B., 2nd Ed., Calcutta 1965.
ASH	The Arabs — A short History, ed. Gateway, Chicago, 1967, 6th Paperback Printing.
BCAI	The Bhakti Cult in Ancient India, Goswamin, B. K. 2nd ed. Varanasi, 1965.
BG	Bombay Gazetteer.
BP	Bhāgavata Purāṇa.
Br U	Bṛhadāraṇykopaniṣad.
CGDL	Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian Languages, Caldwell R., London 1856.
CHI	The Cambridge History of India
CHIB	The Cultural Heritage of India, ed. Bhattacharya H., 4 Vols. Calcutta, 1956.
CN	Chach-nāmā, Tr. by Mirza K. B.
CSDS	A Critical Study of Dara Shikoh's *Samudra-Saṁgama*, Chaudhary, Roma, Calcutta, 1954, 2 Vols.
CSIP	A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy, Sharma C., Varanasi, 1964.
DPPU	The Philosophy of the Upanisads, Deussen Paul, New York, 1966, Doveder
DWDS	Divine Wisdom of the Dravidian Saints, Madras, 1902.
ECLTL	An Etymological and Comparative Lexicon of the Tamil Language, (G)Nana Prakasan, S., Channakam (Ceylon) 1938.
EHVFMB	Early History of the Vaisnava Faith and Movement in Bengal, Dc, S. K.

EI	Encyclopaedia of Islam.
EME	The Essentials of Mysticism and other Essays, London, 1920.
ERE	Encyclopaedia of Religion & Ethics, Hastings.
ERRSR	Essays & Reflections on the Religious & Social Reform, Ranade, R. D., Bombay, 1964.
FSSI	Folk Songs of South India, Gover, C. E., London, 1872.
GK	Gauḍapāda's Kārikā.
GMIC	Glimpses of Medieval Indian Culture, 2nd Ed. Bombay 1959.
HB	History of Bengal, Stewart, C.
HCIP	History and Culture of the Indian People, ed. Majumdar, R. C.
HCIP III	The Classical Age, The History & Culture of the Indián People, Vol. III.
HCIP VI	The Delhi Sultanate — The History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol. VI.
HIOH	The History of India as told by its own Historians, Elliot, H. M., and Dowson, J. London, 1897.
HIP	A History of Indian Philosophy, Dasgupta, S. N.
HM	Hindu Mysticism, Dasgupta, S. N., New York 1959.
HMM	Hindu and Muslim Mysticism, New York 1969.
HRMPI	History of the Rise of Muhammadan Power in India, Firishtah, Muhamad Qasim Hindu Shah, Tr. Briggs, John.
HSAD	Historical Sketches of Ancient Dekhan, Aiyer, S. K. V., Madras.
HVL	Hindu View of Life, Radhakrishnan, S., London, 1954.
IFC	India in the Fifteenth Century, Abdur Razzaq, Tr. Major, R. H.,
IGI	The Imperial Gazetteer of India.
IHKT	Introduction to al-Hallaj's Kitab-al Tawasin, Paris, 1913.
IHM	An Introduction to the History of Mysticism, Smith, M.

II	Indian Islam — A Religious History of Islam in India, Bombay 1930.
IIIC	Influence of Islam on Indian Culture, Allahabad, 1963.
IPS	The Idea of Personality in Sufism, Nicholson, R. A., London 1964.
IRA	India in the Ramayana Age, Vyas, S. N. Delhi 1967.
ISHP	The Indian Sub-continent in Historical Perspective, Basham, A. L., London 1958.
KFB	Kitab Fatah-ul-Buldan, Tr. Hitti. P. K. and Murgotten, F. C.
KKP	Kabir and Kabir Panth, Westcott, G. H., 2nd Edition, Calcutta, 1953.
KMM	Ibn Hawqal, Kitab-al, Masalik wa al-Mamalik Ibn Hawqal, ed. M.G. De Goej, (Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum), Leiden, 1873, 2 Vols.
LBLH	The Life of Buddha as Legend and History, Thomas, S. N., London 1969.
LGSS	Love of God According to Saiva Siddhanta, Dhavamony, M., Oxford, 1971.
LHA	A Literary History of the Arabs, Nicholson, Cambridge, 1930.
LI	The Legacy of India, Garratt, G. T. Oxford, 1938.
LRI	Living Religions of India.
LRIP	The Living Religions of the Indian People, Macnicol, N., London, 1934.
LTM	The Life and Teachings of Sri Madhvacharya, Padmanabhachar, C. M., Madras, 1909.
MCI	Muslim Civilization in India, Ikram, S. M., London, 1964.
MDG	A Madras District Gazetteer.
MEM	Mystical Elements in Muhammad, Archer, J. C., New Haven, 1924.
MI	Muhammad and Islam, New Haven, 1917.
MICT	Mediaeval Indian Culture and Thought, Bhagi, M. L., Ambala Cantt, 1965.
MIMHI	Mutual Influence of Muhammedans and Hindus in India, Thomas, F. W. Cambridge, 1892.

MIMR	Mediaeval India under Muhammadan Rule, Lane-Poole, S. New York, 1951.
MIN	The Mystics of Islam, Nicholson, R. A., London, 1914.
MMI	Mediaeval Mysticism of India, Sen, K., London, 1929.
MRMI	Modern Religious Movements of India, Farquhar, J. N., London, 1924.
MSP	Mysticism, Sacred and Profane, Oxford, 1961.
OBD	An Oriental Biographical Dictionary, Beal, T.W., New York, 1965.
ORLI or RLI	An Outline of the Religious Literature of India, Farquhar, J.N.
PGHL	Pathway to God in Hindi Literature, Ranade, R. D., Bombay 1959.
PI	The Préaching of Islam, Arnold, T. W., Lahore, 1965.
PRFNI	The Popular Religion and Folklore of Northern India, Crooke, W., Delhi, 1968
PU	Praśna Upaniṣad.
PUR	The Principal Upanisads, Radhakrishnan, S.
RHCI	The Religions and Hidden Cults of India, London, n.d.
RI	The Religions of India, Barth, A., Tr. Wood, J., Varanasi, 1963.
RIB	The Relha of Ibn Battutah, Baroda, 1953. (India, Maldive Islands and Ceylon) tr. Mahdi Husain.
RIHYB	Religions of India—Hinduism, Yoga, Buddhism, Berry, T., New York, 1971.
RISHB	The Religion of India—The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism, New York, 1958.
RLIKF	The Religious Life of India—Kabir and his Followers, Keay, F.E., Calcutta, 1931.
RPME	The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors, Sharma, S.R., Bombay, 1962.
RQIIT	The Religious Quest of India, Indian Theism, Macnicol, N.,London 1915.

RRI	Revelation and Reason in Islam, Arberry, A.J., London, 1957.
RSH	Religious Sects of the Hindus, Calcutta 1958.
S	Sufism—An Account of the Mystics of Islam, London, 1950, 1956.
SA	Sayyid Ahmad—A Study of the Religious Reform Movement of Sayyid Ahmad of Rae Bareli, Hedayetullah, Lahore 1970.
SB	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.
SBE	The Sacred Books of the East, ed.Max Muller.
SEI	Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam.
SGSD	Some great Sufis and their Doctrines, Chaudhury, Roma, Calcutta, 1948.
SGSD	Sufism and Vedanta-Chaudhury, Roma, Part II, some Great Sufis and their Doctrines.
SHI	A Short History of India, Moreland, W.H., and Chatterji, A.C., London, 1945.
SICI	Studies in Islamic Culture in India.
SICIE	Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment, Aziz Ahmad, Oxford, 1964.
The Sikhs	The Sikhs in Relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Ahmadiyyas—A study in Comparative Religion, Archer, J.C. Princeton, 1964.
SIM	Studies in Islamic Mysticism, Nicholson, R.A., Cambridge, 1921.
SIT	Sources of Indian Tradition, New York 1958
SL	The Sanskrit Language, Burrow, T., London, 1955.
SLSS	Special Lectures on Saiva Siddhanta, Balasubramaniam, K.M.,Madras, 1959.
SMYI	Sufis, Mystics and Yogis of India, Munshi, KM.
SR	The Sikh Religion-Its Gurus, Sacred Writings and Authors, Macauliffe, M.A., Oxford, 1909.
TS	Tarikh-i-Sindh, Nadvi, A.Z., Karachi, 1947.

VRI	The Vaishnavite Reforms in India, Rajagopalacharya, T.
VSMRS	Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems, Varanasi, 1965
YAP	A Year amongst the Persians, Brown E.G., London, 1950

JOURNALS

AP	Aryan Path
AR	Asiatic Researches
BJRL	Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Manchester
IA	The Indian Antiquary
IC	Indian Culture
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly
IsC	Islamic Culture
JASB	Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal
JIH	Journal of Indian History
JPASB	Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal
JRASB	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain
MM	Macmillan's Magazine
PAIOC	Proceedings of the All India Oriental Conference

CHAPTER I

History of the Interaction of Hindu-Muslim Ideas

(A) THE BACKGROUND OF INTERACTION

THE interaction between Hinduism and Islām in India and outside India took place over a period of several centuries beginning from the early years of the seventh century of the Christian era. The interaction of faith and practice between the two religions was not only a lengthy but also a complicated process which demands careful investigation. Before dealing with the nature of the interaction as it was experienced by Hindus and Muslims in their practical life, it is necessary to analyse briefly the background of the interaction in broad outline.

A variety of factors makes the study of this interaction exceedingly complex. Firstly, there is a dearth of evidence showing specific instances of either religion influencing the other, for the religious movements of medieval India have left few records in this respect. Secondly, there is the uncertainty as to whether a particular pattern of behaviour and belief found in both religions had a common origin in one, or grew up independently in both systems. The intricate question of the relation of Hindu and Muslim mystical movements is an example of this difficulty. Finally, one is confronted not only with the problem of identifying Islamic influences on Hinduism but also Hindu influences on Islām, for the process of interaction is complicated "by a double movement." Original Hindu influences, for instance, may have passed over into Islām; with the movement or process that resulted from this influence then, in turn, influencing Hinduism. Mysticism again provides a possible illustration.

The most obvious result of the religious impact of Islām on Hinduism, of course, is the existence of a large Muslim population in India. The view that Islām was propagated in India primarily through arms cannot be upheld historically. Aside from other evidence, the distribution of the Muslim population does not support it. It has been argued by different scholars that if the spread of Islām was due to the might of the Muslim

kings, one would expect the largest proportion of Muslims in those areas which were the centres of Muslim political power. This, however, is not the case, as is shown by the actual distribution of the Muslim population in and around Delhi, Lucknow, Aḥmadābād, Aḥmadnagar, Bījāpūr, etc.[1] On the other hand, Islām was never a political power in Malabar, "yet today Muslims form nearly 30 per cent of its total population."[2] The creation of the State of Pākistān in 1947 is another instance in point.[3] These historical facts point to the fact that Muslim political authorities were not primarily instrumental in spreading Islām in India (cf. *infra*, p. 23), rather, it is fairly clear that most of the conversions was the work of the Ṣūfīs (Muslim mystics) and Muslim trader-missionaries who came to India beginning with the early seventh century of the Christian era (cf. ch. II). It is these Muslim missionaries who were instrumental in facilitating the inter-action and assimilation between Islām and Hinduism.

In South and South-western India, as early as the seventh century A.D. Arab Muslim traders, who were also missionaries, came and settled and carried out, unhampered and even encouraged by the Hindus (cf. *infra*, p. 15), both their commercial and missionary activities.[4] Some time later a number of influential Ṣūfīs went to these regions and converted large numbers to Islām (cf. ch. II).

In the North and North-western regions of India (including Pākistān) the process of Muslim migration was augmented in

1. Although these places were the principal centres of Muslim political power, there has never been a Muslim majority in these areas. Even in the case of Mysore, where Tipū Sulṭān, in modern times, is said to have forced conversion to Islām, the ineffectiveness of royal proselytism may be measured by the fact that Muslims are scarcely 5 per cent of the total population of the state.

2. MCI, 123-24.

3. According to the Lāhore Resolution, which the All-India Muslim League passed in 1940, a Muslim state, namely, Pākistān, was created on Indian soil consisting of those geographically contiguous areas where the majority of the population was Muslim. Northwest Frontier Province, Balūchistān, Sindh and the western part of the Punjāb formed West Pākistān. Eastern Bengal and a part of the district of Sylhet (of the province of Assam) constituted East Pākistān (Bangladesh since December 16th, 1971). These areas had never been centres of Muslim political power. The case of Sylhet is particularly interesting, for there is no evidence to show that any Muslim ruler had ever lived in that district. Nevertheless, the majority Muslim population of that district overwhelmingly voted in a referendum to join Pākistān in 1947.

4. Cf. R. C. Majumdar, HCIP, III, 456.

the thirteenth century by the thousands of Muslim theologians and Ṣūfīs who fled to India to escape the Mongol terror. Thus Pīr Shams Tabrīzī came to Multān, Khawājah Quṭb-ud-Dīn Bakhtiyār came to Delhi and Sayyīd Jalāl settled in Uch, south of Multān. These Ṣūfīs apparently converted large number of Hindus to Islām (cf. *infra*, pp. 54 ff.).

In Bengal, the Ṣūfīs found the widest response to their message among the outcastes and depressed classes.[5] To them, the creed of Islām, with its emphasis on equality, must have come as a liberating force. The acceptance of Islām not only ensured free and equal entry into the great Islamic brotherhood, but, also, exemption from the burdensome poll-tax (*jizya*).[6] In Bengal the Ṣūfīs "very frequently transferred ancient Hindu and Buddhist stories of miracles to Muslim saints, fusing the old religion into the new on a level that could be accepted by the masses."[7]

It may be pointed out here that although the contribution of the Muslim missionaries in spreading Islām in India should be emphasised, the role played by the Muslim rulers in this respect cannot be disregarded completely. Therefore, the respective parts played by both missionaries and the political authorities will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

According to the Muslim historian Ibn-ul-Athīr, there had been Muslims in the Banares area, the holy city of Hinduism,

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5. See Arnold, T. W., PI, 280-281; also see H. Blochmann, *JASB*, XLII (1873), 209-310; XLIII (1874), 280-309; XLIV (1875), 275-306; J. Wise, *JASB*, LXIII (1894), 28-63; Stewart, C., *The History of Bengal*, London, 1813, p. 176.

6. "Tribute" or "Protection-tax." The tax was levied on those non-Muslims (*dhimmīs*) who lived in Muslim territories. While the pagans had the choice only between Islām or death, the professors of a scripture (*ahl al-kitāb*) may obtain security and protection for themselves, their families and properties by paying the *jizya*. The law has been enjoined by the Qur'ān 9.29: "Fight them, that believe not in God and the last day and who hold not as forbidden what God and His apostle have forbidden, and do not profess the true religion, those that have scripture, until they pay the *jizya* in person in subjection." According to the Qur'ānic description of *ahl al-kitāb*, the Hindus are not "People of the Book." Therefore, they could not have expected protection from the Indian Muslim government by paying *jizya*. However, the contacts between the Hindus and the Muslims resulted in softening the attitudes of the latter towards the former. Therefore, for consideration of accommodation, though repugnant to the law of Islām the Muslim rulers of India granted their Hindu subjects the status of *Dhimmīs* and by levying poll-tax protected them. For further information on *jizya*, see C. H. Becker, "Djizya", SEI, 91-92.

7. Ikrām, p. 124.

since the days of Maḥmūd b. Sabuktigin, in the beginning of the eleventh century A.D.[8] A renowned Indian historian gives us more definite information in this respect. Speaking about the Muslim settlements in India, R. C. Majumdar tells us on the authority of *Chach-nāma*[9] that before the Muslim conquest of Sindh in 712 A.D., King Dāhar of Sindh had a body of 500 Arab Muslim troops in his service.[10] These Arab Muslims are said to have come to India and settled here and there.

Some of them appear to have joined Dāhar's service. S. M. Ikrām tells us that there is a local tradition in certain old centres in the heart of Uttar Pradesh (probably Banaras) that Muslim families had settled there long before the conquest of the areas by Muḥammad Ghūrī (1192 A.D.).[11] Although we have no definite evidence of the first Muslim settlement in India on a large scale, still the isolated facts mentioned in earlier chronicles and histories, such as the *Chach-nāma* and Balādhūrī's account,[12] enable us to form a general idea of its nature. In any case, by the end of the fourteenth century, Islām had permeated all parts of India, and the process which eventually led to the conversion of a large percentage of the population to Islām, and resulted in far-reaching cultural and religious changes, was fully underway.

The developments which resulted from this exchange in the cultural sphere—such as the development of regional languages, the rise of Hindūstānī and the evolution of Indo-Muslim music, art and architecture—are beyond the scope of this work. The

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8. See Elliot, H. M., and Dowson, J. (ed.), HIOH, II, 251

9. *Chach-nāma*, written by Muḥammad 'Alī ibn Ḥamīd ibn Abū Bakr Kūfī in twelfth century, tr. Mirza Kalich Beg Fredunbeg, 2 vols., Karachi, 1900, is a local chronicle of Sindh. For an account of this work, see R. C. Majumdar, JIH, X, Supplement, pp. 11 ff. Majumdar considers it as a valuable record with more details though less reliable. Extracts of *Chach-nāma* have been translated by Elliot and Dowson, I, 131-211.

10. Cf. HCIP, III, 457; also see S. N. Dhar, IHQ, XVI, 596-97; M. A. Ghanī, "The Advent of the Arabs in Hindūstān, their Relations with the Hindus; and the Occupation of Sindh", *Proceedings of the All-India Oriental Conference* X, 403.

11. *Op.cit.*, p. 32.

12. Balādhūrī (d. 279/892) is one of the earliest Muslim writers on India. His famous work : *Kitāb Futūḥ-ul-Buldān*, tr. P.K. Hitti and F. C. Murgotten, is considered to be a masterpiece, and has universally acquired the status of an authority on Indian subjects. R. C. Majumdar considers it a work less detailed but more reliable.

present work will examine the religious movements, more specifically the *bhakti* movements, and especially the *bhakti* religion advocated by Kabir in fifteenth century, which seem to owe something to the interaction of Hinduism and Islām. Although the lack of the proper kind of historical records makes it impossible to determine the detailed process of interaction, what is certain is that the period under review witnessed developments of great importance in the religious life of people exposed to the radically different religious traditions of Hinduism and Islām.

Although as a religious concept *bhakti*, or the idea of a religion of devotion, may possibly be as old as Hinduism itself[13], a cultic movement based specifically on *bhakti* started in the Tamil land of South India in the early years of the Christian era.[14] The Śaivite and the Vaiṣṇavite saints were the originators of this *Bhakti Movement* (cf. ch. III). The cause of this *bhakti* cult was later championed by great philosophers like Rāmānuja, Madhva, Vallabha and others (cf. ch. III). In the early fifteenth century a certain saint of great repute, called Rāmānanda,[15] took this *bhakti* cult to North India where it swept through the entire religious life of the masses.[16] The fifteenth century, it has been observed, "was marked by an extraordinary outburst of devotional poetry inspired by these religious movements, and this stands out as one of the great formative periods in the history of northern India, a period in which on the one hand the modern languages were firmly established as vehicles of literary expression, and on the other the faith of the people was permeated by new ideas."[17]

Kabīr (1440-1518), one of the disciples of the saint Rāmānanda, who is considered by many to be the most interesting

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13. B. K. Goswami has done a great job in analysing different terms of the Vedic literature such as "upāsanā", "bhajana", "śraddhā", etc. These terms, according to Goswami, expressed in *namaskāra*, *vandanā*, *sevā*, *archanā*, are nothing but different ways of expressing *bhakti* to the Divine. (cf. BCAI, 3) This is perhaps one of the best and most comprehensive books on ancient Indian *bhakti*.

14. For preliminary information about the subject, see G. A. Grierson, *JRAS*, XLIII (1911), 800-801.

15. Cf. J. N. Farquhar, *JRAS*, LII (1920), 185-92; LIV (1922), 373-80.

16. The whole *bhakti* movement beginning from the sixth or the seventh century of the Christian Era up to the fifteenth century has been discussed in detail in ch. III.

17. Moreland W. H. and Chatterjee, A. C., SHI, 193.

product of the interaction of Islām and Hinduism, is also one of the most outstanding of all *bhakti* reformers. As a true child of the two cultures, he was the first person to strive to break down some of the barriers that separated Hindus from Muslims and to introduce a synthesised religion or a piety acceptable to members of both religions.

The characteristic features of *bhakti* movements are : (1) a strong monotheistic tendency (in some *bhakti* schools this went so far as the rejection of the usual Hindu images); and (2) the equality of all men (in some *bhakti* schools this included even a rejection of the traditional Hindu caste prejudices).

The religious schools and movements which arose during this period (seventh to fifteenth century A.D.) are the results of mutual influences of Hindus and Muslims through *bhakti* mysticism. Some argue that the influence of Islām is the determining factor. This view, however, seems to be an oversimplification of a very complex phenomenon, for many of the elements associated with the *bhakti* movement of the period under examination had already been important elements in Hinduism for many centuries. It is reasonable to assume that the influence of Islām gave an impetus to the already existing *bhakti* ideas, such as monotheism, human equality, etc. This view has been corroborated by scholars like Yūsuf Ḥusain[18] and Sayyīd 'Ābid Ḥusain.[19] We have historical evidence showing that the Ṣūfīs had been directly or indirectly influenced by Hindu thought and institutions before the conquest of India by the Muslims (cf. ch. II). Then, during the period under investigation the Ṣūfīs in turn stimulated and revitalised, in conjunction with the *bhakti* reformers, those very elements of Hinduism which had originally influenced them. Thus Dr. S. Radhakrishnan observes : "The reform movements of Rāmānanda, Caitanya, Kabīr, and Nānak show the stimulus of Islām."[20] This view has been affirmed by Ikrām.[21]

Because of the importance of great names such as Kabīr and Nānak there is a tendency to regard, what was essentially a movement of interaction between two faiths, as being in the

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18. Cf. GMIC, 15, 31.
19. See *Indian Culture*, New York, 1963, p. 23.
20. HVL, 22
21. Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 125.

main the one-sided influence of Islām on Hinduism. This impression is probably misleading, for the contact of cultures means an interchange of ideas and customs and does not usually lead to the complete domination of the one by the other. Hence Professor Radhakrishnan has justly said: "The clash of cults and the contact of cultures do not, as a rule, result in a complete domination of the one by the other. In all true contact there is an interchange of elements, though the foreign elements are given a new significance by those who accept them."[22] Islamic ideas played a vital role in revitalising Indian *bhakti* ideas. However, Muslim society also was deeply influenced by its contact with Hinduism. Some of these contacts had been made even before Islamic rule was established in India, as we shall discuss later.

Another aspect of this interaction which is often mis-interpreted are the Hindu practices which are followed by Indian Muslims. This may not be a simple case of Hindu influence upon Muslims, but is probably more often an indication of an incomplete change from the old way of life. Indian Muslims, it should be remembered, did not start with orthodox Islām, but began by accepting a few basic principles, which the Ṣūfīs imparted to them, and only in the course of time have they become more orthodox, and sometimes even fanatically dogmatic. This process of conversion was less complete in the lower classes, or those groups which, like the Khojahs, adopted a somewhat composite form of religion.[23]

The main influence of Hinduism on Islām is probably seen not so much in specific instances of religious practice as in a general softening of the original attitude of the Muslim rulers in religious matters.[24]

There is a general impression in many histories of this period that there was never a genuine attempt to create understanding and a rapprochement between the two faiths except on the part

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22. *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

23. See H. T. Colebrooke, AR, VIII (1801), 338-44; B. Frere, MM, XXXIV (1876), 431-33; A. Wālī, *JASB*. LXVII 1898), 112; *JASB*, LXVIII (1899), 61-62; Mahdī Ḥusain (tr. & com.), RIB, for the *Bohra* and the *Khoja*, see App. N, pp. 273-77.

24. Cf. Macnicol, N., RQIIT, 138. The question of Indian Muslim rulers' attitudes towards the Hindus will be dealt with in the next chapter.

of Kabīr (and Nānak); and there is an impression that the contacts between the two religions were, on the whole, superficial as far as the total life of the country was concerned. Writing in 1030, before the full tide of conquest had begun, Al-Birūnī noticed how the Hindus differed from the Muslims in every respect, and, because of the raids by Maḥmūd of Ghazna, "cherish the most inveterate aversion toward all Muslims."[25] Nearly three centuries later another Muslim traveller, Ibn Baṭṭūṭah,[26] remarked that Hindus and Muslims lived in entirely separate communities. For Hindus there could be no intermarriage with Muslims nor even interdining. "It is the custom among the heathens of the Malabar country", he remarked, "that no Muslims should enter their houses or use their vessels for eating purposes. If a Muslim is fed out of their vessels, they either break the vessels or give them away to the Muslims."[27]

This observation is true to some extent. But the initial hostility between the two peoples was followed by a process of interaction and assimilation even among the orthodox sections of the two faiths. As for the radical mystics of the two religions,

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25. Sachau, E. C. (ed.), AI, I, 22.

26. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah (1304-1377/78), was born at Tangier and died at Fez after having travelled as far as India and China. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah stands last in the long list of the Arab and Persian geographers and explorers who came to India, such as Sulaymān at-Tājir (d. 238/852), Abū Dulāf Mis 'ar al-Yanbū 'ī (d. 332/943), Buzurg ibn Shahryar (d. 298/910), al-Istakharī (d. 341/952), Ibn Hawqal (d. 320/943), al-Maqdisī (d. 376/986), al-Birūnī (d. 401/1010) and Abū'l Ḥasan al-Mas 'ūdī (d. 303/915). The last named visited Multān and Manṣūra in the North and travelled into the South upto Cambay and Ceylon. His famous book, *Murūj-udh-Dhahab* contains an account of India and mentions names of different places accurately. Sulaymān at-Tājir is said to have explored the Indian Ocean, rounded the whole coastline of India and visited Ceylon and Konkan. The book of his travels entitled *Silsalat-ut-Tawārīkh* was translated into French and published in Paris (1718). The following travellers also visited India: Abū Zayd Ḥasan (d. 265/878), Ibn Rosta (d. 291/903), Qudamā ibn Ja 'far (d. 297/909), Zakārīyā Qazwinī (d. 682/1283), al-Balādhūrī (d. 297/892), Ibn al-Nadīm (378/988), al-Idrisī (d. 561/1165) and Yāqūṭ (d. 628/1230). Many of these have made important contributions to Indian geography, Indian customs and traditions, manners and habits and religion and philosophy. Some of them like Sulaymān at-Tājir, Mas'ūdī, al-Birūnī and Ibn Baṭṭūṭah have earned immortal fame, their respective works having become classical. These facts help us to understand that India and the Muslim world did not live in isolation. The Muslims took immense interest in knowing about India. The contacts between India and the Muslims remained continuous since the beginning of Islām.

27. Mahdī Ḥusain, p. 182 cited by Ikrām, p. 132.

who considered themselves devotees of God not strictly bound by the rules of any organised religious system and thus transcending all sectarian differences, they went far beyond the boundaries of the orthodox religions. The process of the interaction and assimilation fostered by these mystics touched even the fundamental principles of both religions. The *bhakti* mysticism of Kabīr is the best example of this type.

It is against this background that we must see the greatness of the achievements of Kabīr and, at the same time, we should realise the almost insurmountable barriers to an enduring rapprochement. Notwithstanding, Kabīr's efforts attained a measure of success at least during his lifetime, and the impetus of his ideas continued for a long time.

(B) THE NATURE OF THE INTERACTION

Hinduism and Islām are two very different religions. Dr. Radhakrishnan defines Hinduism in the following words :

> To many it seems to be a name without any content. It is a museum of beliefs, a medley of rites, or a mere map, a geographical expression ? Its content, if it has any, has altered from age to age, from community to community. It meant one thing in the Vedic period, another in the Brāhmanical, and a third in the Buddhist. It means one thing to the Śaivite, another to the Vaiṣṇavite, a third to the Śākta.[28]

In short, Hinduism is not a religion of some fixed rites and rituals. It is a complex whole having root in the Vedas, the Epics, the Purāṇas and the Tantras. Dogmatism is not a characteristic feature of Hinduism. The flexibility of its nature can be measured from the ease with which it has steadily absorbed the customs and ideas of people with whom it has come in contact. Radhakrishnan maintains:

> Hinduism is the religion not only of the Vedas but of the Epics and the Purāṇas. By accepting the significance of the different institutions of reality and the different scriptures of the peoples living in India (*sarvāgamaprāmāṇya*), Hinduism has come to be a tapestry of the most variegated tissues and almost endless diversity of hues. Hinduism is therefore not a definite dogmatic creed, but a vast, complex, but subtly

28. *Op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

> unified mass of spiritual thought and realisation. Its tradition of the godward endeavour of the human spirit has been continuously enlarging through the ages.[29]

In contradistinction to this character of Hinduism, Islām, as a religio-cultural force, is in most respects the "very antithesis of Hinduism."[30] Professor 'Azīz Aḥmad describes the points of difference between Hinduism and Islām in the following way:

> Hinduism is a large aggregate of belief, developed in the course of many centuries, evolving from the sacrificial hymns of the Vedas to the philosophical speculation of the Upaniṣads, the discipline of Yoga, the metaphysical subtleties of Vedānta and the passionate devotion of Bhakti. Islām, on the other hand, is bound by an austere central discipline, revolving round Qur'ān, the *VOX DEI*, and *ḥadīth*,the *VOX Prophetae*;. .'' [31]

In line with the above statement a Western missionary-scholar, Murray T. Titus observes: "For twelve long centuries Islām has been in contact with Hinduism in India. For twelve centuries each community has been confronted by the other .... Their differences of belief, together with communal aspirations on the one hand contending with an instinct for communal preservation on the other, have been the source of much friction which continues to the present day."[32] Al-Birūnī, the first Muslim who wrote on this topic after having lived and studied in the Indian society for some time in the eleventh century, observes:

> They [Hindus] totally differ from us in religion; as we believe in nothing in which they believe, and *vice versa*. On the whole, there is very little disputing about theological topics among themselves; at the utmost, they fight with words, but they will never stake their soul or body or their property on religious controversy. On the contrary, all their fanaticism is directed against those who do not belong to them—against all foreigners (evidently the reference is to the Muslims). They call them *mleccha*, i.e. impure, and

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29. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
30. Thomas, F. W., MIMHI, 12.
31. SICIE, 73.
32. II, 176

forbid having any connection with them,...In all manners and usages they differ from us to such a degrec as to frighten their children with us, with our dress, and our ways and customs, and so to declare us to be devil's breed, and our doings as the very opposite of all that is good and proper.[33]

There are innumerable early and recent writers who confirm this point.[34] The mutual interaction of the two communities and the mutual influences in manners, ceremonies, superstitions, mysticism and a common economic life, "touched merely the fringe and external element" of their existence; "neither the Hindus nor the Muslims imbibed, even to the least degree, the chief characteristic features of the other's culture which may be regarded as their greatest contribution to human civilization"; and in the set pattern of their respective behaviour in India, "the Hindus combined catholicity in religious outlook with bigotry in social ethics, while the Muslims displayed an equal bigotry in religious ideas with catholicity in social behaviour."[35] But despite bigotry on the part of both religions, some kind of interaction was unavoidable. On the mystical level, especially the *bhakti* type of mysticism, some Hindu and Muslim mystics actively sought to remove those barriers which kept the two communities separated, and evolved a type of religion of devotion which was a blending of some elements taken from both religions. This as we shall see was the case with Kabīr.

Contacts between India and Islām were made on at least four grounds, viz., intellectual, commercial, political and religio-mystical.

(a) *Intellectual* : Professor P. K. Hitti remarks that "India acted as an early source of inspiration, especially in wisdom, literature and mathematics."[36] The earliest recorded Indo-Muslim intellectual contact took place in 771 A.D. when a Hindu astronomer and mathematician reached Baghdād bringing with him a Sanskrit book entitled *Brahma-Siddhānta* (by Brahmagupta) which he translated into Arabic (entitled *Sindhind*) with the help of an Arab scholar, named, al-Fazārī.

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33. Sachau, pp. 19-20.
34. See Basham, A. L., ISHP *passim*; Tara Chand, in *Abū'l Kalām Azād*, ed. Humayūn Kabīr, Bombay, 1959, p. 238.
35. Majumdar, R. C. (ed.), HCIP, VI, 616-17
36. ASH, 116

It had the greatest influence in the development of Muslim astronomy.[37] This same Indian traveller had also brought a treatise on mathematics by means of which the numerals (called in Europe Arabic, but by the Arabs *al-ruqum al-Hindiyyah*, "Indian numerals") were introduced to Muslim culture. Later, in the ninth century, India made another important contribution to Muslim mathematical science, the decimal system.[38] Indian medicine received great patronage from the Caliphate of Baghdād. Many Sanskrit books (at least 15) on medicine were translated into Arabic.[39] Indian doctors enjoyed great respect in Baghdād. One of these doctros was Manka, who was specially sent to treat Caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786-809).[40]

Sanskrit books on astrology, palmistry, logic, alchemy, magic, ethics, statecraft, etc. gained wide popularity in the Muslim world. Some of the stories of the *Arabian Nights* are attributed to Indian origin; an Arabic translation of the *Pañchatantra*, namely *Kalila wā Dimna*,[41] came to be very popular in Muslim countries. The Muslims also got the games of chess and chausar from India in the seventh century.[42] An Arab Muslim writer

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37. The stars were, of course, important to the Arabs because of their desert life, but no scientific study of them was undertaken until this time. Islām added its impetus to the study of astronomy as a means for fixing the direction in which prayer should be conducted The famous al-Khawārzmī (d. 850) based his widely known astronomical tables on al-Fazarī's work and syncretised the Indian and Greek systems of astronomy adding his own contributions (cf. *ibid.*, p. 117.).

38. Cf. *ibid.*; also see De Bary, Wm. T., SIT 378; R.C. Majumdar, HCIP, III, 640.

39. Cf. Ikrām, p. 15; also see HCIP, III, 640.

40. See Ikrām, p. 15; also cf. W. Cureton, *JRAS*, VI (1841) 105-19; S. F. Darwin Fox, AP II (1931), 780-84.

41. Cf. W. Wright, *JRAS*, N. S., VII (1875), Appn. 1. According to P. K. Hitti, the basis of the *Alf-wa-laylah* (Thousand and One Nights) was a Persian work containing several stories of Indian origin (cf. *History of the Arabs*, p. 414). Obviously, it alludes to *Pañchatantra* which is a collection of fables containing wise maxims. It was first translated in the sixth century from Sanskrit into Pahlavi, and then from Pahlavi into Arabic and Syriac (cf. HCIP, III, 640).

42. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 639; also see Ikrām, p. 16.

Referring to a Pahlavi work, R. C. Majumdar tells us that half a century before Harshavardhana (r. 606-646/47) and Pulakeśin II (cf. Harsha and Pulakeśin II, HCIP, III, 105-106), an Indian king, named Devśaram (Devaśarman?), sent an embassy to the Persian King Khusru I with rich presents and a set of chessmen with board. Persian poet Firdawsī says in his famous book *Shāhnāmah* that ambassadors from the sovereign of Hind came to Khusru I (Anushirvan) with a chessboard and men asking him to solve the secrets of the game. Other Persian and Arabian writers

named Jahiz (d. 869) mentions that Indian music influenced Arabs, and was popular in Baghdād in his day.[43]

(b) *Commercial* : The first group of Arab Muslims who came to India were the trader-missionaries. R. C. Majumdar informs us that there was maritime intercourse from very early period between India and Persia and Arabia, and we have definite evidence that the relation continued even after the spread of Islam in those countries.[44] That means, the Arab Muslims came to the coast of India in the wake of their pagan ancestors who had carried on maritime trade between India and the West. In fact, the Arab traders were a commercial link between East and West since the dawn of history.[45]

According to one account, the first Muslim fleet appeared in Indian waters in 636 A.D. during the Caliphate of 'Umar, when 'Uthmān Sakīfī, the Governor of Baḥrayn and Umān, sent an army across the sea to Tanah.[46] M. J. Rowlandson says that the Muslim Arabs first settled on the Malabar coast about the end of the seventh century.[47] This opinion has been confirmed by other writers. R. C. Majumdar, for example, speaking about India's trade relations with Persia and Arabia, says, "It is therefore highly probable that Muslim traders, who frequented the coastal regions, near the important ports, lived

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state that *Shatranj* (i. e. chess, from Sanskrit (*Chaturaṅga*) came into Persia from India and there appears to be a consensus of opinion that may be considered to settle the question. Thus we have the game passing from the Hindus to the Persians, and thence to the Arabs in seventh century, and from them, directly or indirectly, to various parts of Europe subsequently (cf. *The Classical Age*. p. 639; also see G.B.H. "Chess", *Encyclopaedia Britanica* V (1971), 457-69).

43. Cf. Ikrām, pp. 16-17; also see Nadvī, S. S., *'Arab wa Hind ke Ta 'alluqāt*, Allahābād, 1950, pp. 127 157-58.

44. Cf. HCIP, III 456,

45. See U. N. Ghoshal, "Economic Conditions", HCIP, III, 598-99; also cf. Tara Chand, IIIC, 30. J. Edkins, "Ancient Navigation in the Indian Ocean", *JRAS*, N.S., XVIII (1886), 1-27.

46. Cf. R. C. Majumdar, HCIP, III, 167-69. During 'Umar's Caliphate (634-44) as many as three naval expeditions were sent against India: one against Tanah (Thana near Bombay). The other two expeditions were aimed at Barwas (Broach), and Debal (*ca.* 643), a sea-port at the mouth of the Indus. The Arab historians record a victory, but according to *Chach-nāma*, the Muslims were defeated and their leader was killed at the battle of Debal (cf. *ibid.*, p. 169). However, these expeditions were in the nature of raids, and probably no conspicuous success was achieved. Also see Elliot and Dowson, I, 15-16.

47. See IIIC, 32; also cf. J. Duncan, "Historical Remarks on the Coast of Malabar with some descriptions of the manners of its Inhabitants." AR, V (1797), 1-36.

there for long or short periods, and some of them might even have settled there on more or less permanent basis."[48] Another writer, namely, Sturrock, says :

> From the seventh century onwards it is well known that Persian and Arab traders settled in large numbers at the different ports on the Western coast of India and married women of the country and these settlements were specially large and important in Malabar where from the very early time it seems to have been the policy to afford every encouragement to traders of the ports.[49]

Moreover, the Muslims were then living in those areas as may be inferred from Balādhūrī's account of the immediate causes of the Muslim conquest of the Sindh in 712 A.D. He related that the king of Ceylon sent certain orphan Muslim girls, who had been born in that country to Ḥajjāj bin Yūsuf. But the Bawarij (the piratic tribes of Kutch) attacked the ship and seized the girls. Ḥajjāj demanded their release from Dāhir, King of Dipāl, who did not, more likely, could not, comply with the demand. Upon this, Ḥajjāj sent the expedition led by Muḥammadbin Qāsim which resulted in the conquest of Sindh.[50]

According to another account, the first advance of Muslims in South India dates as far back as the early years of the eighth century, when a group of Muslim refugees, to whom the Mophlas trace their descent, came from 'Irāq and settled on the Malabar coast.[51] The trade between India and Europe which was conducted by Arab and Persian Muslims caused a continual stream of Muslim influence to flow in upon the West coast of southern India. "From this constant influx of foreigners", says Arnold, "there resulted a mixed population, half Hindu and half Arab or Persian, in the trading centres along the coast."[52]

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48. HCIP, III, 456.

49. *South Kanara* : *Madras District Mannuals*, pp. 180-81, cited in IIIC, 32. Majumdar is not willing to accept the view that the Muslims settled in the coastal areas in large numbers as early as the seventh century, but affirms that in the beginning of the eighth century a large number of Muslim settlers are found in Sindh (cf. HCIP, III, 456-57).

50. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 169-70; also see Majumdar, R.C., *Ancient India*, Delhi 1964, p. 264; Elliot and Dowson, I, 115-18.

51. See C. A. Innes, "Malabar and Anjengo", in *Madras District Gazetteer*, ed. F. B. Evans, Madras, 1908, p. 436, referred to in Arnold, pp. 266-67, and n. 1.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 267.

Friendly relations seem to have existed between these Muslim traders and the Hindus; the Hindu rulers extended their protection and patronage to the Muslim traders, and the legend of conversion of a Hindu Rājah called Cherāman Perumāl (Muslim name : 'Abdur Raḥmān) indicates that they were allowed to propagate Islām.[53]

The elaborate story of the first introduction of Islām into Malabar and the conversion of the Rājah is given by Zayn-ud-Dīn (16th cent.) in his book, *Tuḥfat al-Mujāhidīn*.[54] In this connection, the names of three persons have been mentioned: they are Shaykh Sharaf bin Mālik, Mālik bin Dīnār and Mālik bin Ḥabīb. They are said to have constructed many mosques throughout Malabar and the surrounding areas. "So rapid was the process of conversion", remarks Titus, "that took place during the early centuries of the Muslim era, that, had the Portuguese not arrived on the scene when they did, it is claimed, the whole of the Malabar coast would have become solidly Muḥammadan."[55]

On the authority of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah (1304-1377), Titus tells us that there were many rich Muslim merchants with whom the towns of Malabar were crowded, and that five mosques stood as an ornament to Quilon.[56]

Although some writers question the historicity of the whole narrative of Zayn-ud-Dīn,[57] Arnold asserts : "But the legend certainly bears witness to the peaceful character of the proselytising influences that were at work on the Malabar coast for centuries."[58] Besides the Arab merchants at missionary work, Ibn Baṭṭūṭah makes mention of several theologians from Arabia and elsewhere whom he met in various towns of the Malabar coast.[59] At any rate, those Muslims intermarried with native

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53. See Logan, W., *Malabar*, *Madras*, 1887-91, I, 231-45, cited in SICI 77; also cf. HCIP, III, 457 n. 3.

54. Cf. Arnold, pp. 267-68; also see Titus, pp. 37-38.

55. *Op. cit.*, p. 39.

56. Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 40; also see C. P. Brown, *JRAS*, N. S., V(1871), 147-48.

57. See Innes, pp. 40 ff. as referred to by Arnold, pp. 268 f.; Titus,p. 38; HCIP, III, 456.

58. *Op. cit.*, p. 268.

59. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 269; also see Mahdī Ḥusain, pp. 185-86. For a description of the whole Malabar coast as given by Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, see *ibid.*, pp. 176-96.

women; some of them are reported to have joined service under Hindu princes; and at least one of them contributed financially to a Hindu temple.[60] Consequent to the preaching of Islām, and conversion to it, interaction and assimilation between the Hindus and the Muslims took place; as a result several mixed communities, such as the Labbes of the east Tamil coast, the Nawāits of the Konkan, aside from the Mophlas, arose in the South. The Zamorin of Calicut, who was one of the chief patrons of Arab trade, is said to have encouraged conversion to Islām in order to man the Arab ships on which he was dependent for his economic prosperity, and to have ordered that in every family of fishermen in his domain one or more of the male members should be brought up as Muslim.[61]

Speaking about the influence of these Arab merchants, Yūsuf Ḥusain holds that their influence must have been very effective upon the people of the lower castes who entered their service. "This must have certainly gone a long way in transforming the social and economic life of the lower castes."[62] Mas'ūdī (d. 915), who travelled in western India, mentions that the Rājah of Balhara, the Valabhī ruler of western India, showed a great respect for Islām and protected the interests of Muslims in his domain. Ibn Hawqal (d. 943), Abū Zayd Ḥasan (d. 878) and Sulaymān at-Tājir (d. 910) all join in praising the Rājah for his patronage and tolerance towards the Muslims. Mas'ūdī further informs us that in all ports of Gujarat the Muslims had built mosques where they said their daily prayers.[63]

During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the time of Rāmānuja, the Arab merchants were still preaching and making conversions on the western and eastern coasts of India. In other words, there were enough Muslims in the South from the eighth century so that South Indian *bhaktas* could have known of them, even though we have no positive evidence that they did. However, on the basis of the fact that there were many Muslims in the South during the time of Rāmānuja,

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60. Referred to in SICI, 77.
61. See Innes, p. 190, referred to by Arnold, p. 269.
62. MIC, 12.
63. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 12-13.

some have suggested the influence of Islām on him.[64] This, of course, is not to assert that Rāmānuja came under the direct influence of Islām. The question, however, is a debatable one, for the possibility that Rāmānuja influenced the Muslims could also be argued. In the absence of positive evidence of contact between Rāmānuja and Muslims we cannot draw any specific conclusions about possible influence, but we can draw attention to certain historical situations that created a general atmosphere of Hindu-Muslim interaction in South India prior to the eleventh century A. D.

Finally, on the authority of Balādhūrī, Titus informs us about the conversion of a King of 'Usayfan, between Multān and Kashmir. The conversion was made by a party of Muslim traders.[65] In Sindh there were Arab merchants who were carrying out missionary work as late as the fourteenth century. "To the influence of such trading communities", suggests Arnold, "was most probably due the conversion of the Sammas, who ruled over Sindh from 1351-1521."[66]

By narrating these stories we want to call attention to the fact that the Arab Muslim merchants made a contribution in preaching Islām and converting the Hindus peacefully, and that as a result friendly relations existed between the Hindus and the Muslims which must have facilitated interaction and assimilation between the two communities. One of the few records of those Muslim missionaries who preached Islām was that of the historian 'Abdur Razzāq, who has left an account of his unsuccessful mission to the court of the Zamorin of Calicut.[67]

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64. See *ibid.*, p. 13.
65. Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 41, referred to *Futūḥ-ul-Buldān*, I, 129-30.
66. *Op. cit.*, p. 277.
67. 'Abdur Razzāq al-Samarqandī was sent on this mission in 1441 by the Timurid Sulṭān Shāh Rūkh in response to an appeal made by a Muslim ambassador who had been sent by the Zamorin of Calicut to this Sulṭān. The ambassador requested the Sulṭān to send an envoy to invite the Zamorin King to Islām. 'Abdur Razzāq was chosen to perform the task, but on his arrival there, he was given a cold reception, and after staying there for about six months, abandoned his mission and returned to Khurāsān (see "Maṭla'al-Sa 'dayn wa Majma ' al-Baḥrayn", London, India Office MS. No. 2704, fol. 173, referred to by Arnold, p. 270; also cf. 'Abdur Razzāq, IFC, R. H. Major, p. 13ff; referred to by Titus, pp. 39-40).

(c) *Political Contact* : The second wave of Muslims came to India through military expeditions and conquests.[68] The first of these was the conquest of Sindh in 712 A.D. to which allusion has been made before. It seems reasonable to expect that the occupation of territory, after a decisive victory by the Muslims, would have resulted in a strong reaction amongst the Hindus against the Islamic conquerors. It is reasonable to assume that the Hindus reacted sharply against this conquest and must have thought that though they could not resist the conquest itself, they could keep themselves aloof from the Muslims and remain securely entrenched in a stronghold of racial and religious separateness. "It seemed", observes ʻĀbid Ḥusain, "that they would never mix with the Muslims."[69]

As for the conquering Muslims, it is reasonable to assume that they must have considered themselves a superior power and would like to conquer perhaps the whole of India and bring the entire Hindu population under their religio-political

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68. The naval expeditions to India have been mentioned. As to the Muslim advance to India by land, we find that the first shock of their invasion was felt equally by the three border kingdoms of Kābul, Zābul and Sindh (see HCIP, III, 167-68). The Arabs made persistent efforts for more than half a century to subdue Kābul and Zābul beginning from 650 to about 710. Although these territories could not be brought under the direct control of the Muslim government of Damascus, the rulers of those kingdoms became Arab tributaries.

Having failed to effect a victory against Sindh by naval expeditions, the Arabs planned to try by land. During the Caliphate of ʻAlī (656-61), an expedition was sent against India (*ca.* 660). The Muslims advanced up to Kikān or Kikānan without any opposition. (Kikān was a state in the hilly region round Bolan Pass, and is referred to by Hiuen Tsang as a kingdom whose people led pastoral life amid the great mountains and valleys in separate clans, without any ruling chief. It was, however, according to *Chach-nāma*, included in the central division of Sindh, under the direct administration of the king). The Muslim army was unsuccessful and the commander of the army was killed in 663 (at the beginning of the Umayyīd Caliphate). During the following twenty years, no fewer than six expeditions were sent against Kikān without permanent success. The only solid gain of the Arabs during this period was the conquest of Makrān (cf. HCIP, III, 169).

Reference has already been made to the immediate cause which led to the Muslim expedition to India, and the eventual conquest of Sindh by them (cf. p. 21). Before Muḥammad b. Qāsim's expedition, it seems there were two expeditions sent against Sindh. The first was under ʻUbaydullāh, while the second was led by Budayl. Both the expeditions against Debal were unsuccessful and the commanders were killed (cf. *ibid.*, p. 170).

69. *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

sway by one means or another. But this did not work. Thus one writer has said :

> During the early centuries of its residence in India, Islām made a determined struggle to maintain its purity and to extend the faith to the last man of the land. Both proved to be unsuccessful. The Qur'ān never really began to supplant the Vedas, but on the contrary, the very faith (*īmān*) and practice (*dīn*) of Islām became modified to a serious extent among large sections of the ever-growing community.[70]

It would, however, appear that for a considerable time no attempt was made by the Muslim rulers to bridge the gulf which separated the two communities. But in due time, Muḥammad bin Qasim (d. 715), the conqueror of Sindh, took the first step in this direction by making a substantial modification in Islamic law. He granted the "polytheistic" and "idolatrous" Hindus the status of *Dhimmī*[71] (non-Muslims under protection of the Muslim state). For this action there is no provision in the Qur'ān, but he seems rather to have gone against the clear injunction of the Qur'ān : "And slay them (the polytheistic idolaters) wherever you come upon them..." (2.191), and "no quarter for idolaters." In other words, by treating the Hindus as *Dhimmīs*, Muḥammad bin Qāsim, in fact, elevated their status in the eyes of Islām to the rank of the Jews and the Christians whom the Qur'ān describes as *Ahl al-Kitāb*[72] (the People of the Book) and on whom the *jizya* (poll-tax) was originally permitted. By making this concession to the Hindus, the Muslim ruler of India, was able to levy a poll-tax on his Hindu subjects, and grant state protection to their life and property. This is referred to in the administrative arrangements which Muḥammad b. Qāsim made with the Hindus after his victory over Rājah Dāhir (712 A.D.). This treaty is known as "the Brāhmanābād

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70. Titus, p. 150.

71. Cf. D. B. Macdonald, "Dhimma", *SEI*, pp. 75-76. The term "Dhimmī", according to the Islamic canon law, includes only the Jews and the Christians (the People of Scripture) : the Sabaeans are also included only in a wider sense. However, some include the Zoroastrians also but the Qur'ān does not make it explicit.

72. See I. Goldziher, "Ahl al-Kitāb", *SEI*, pp. 16-17.

Charter."[73] Commenting on this arrangement, Titus maintains : "This was in itself a marked concession, and marks the first change in Muslim practice, on a large scale, that of necessity came to be adopted in India as a regular policy."[74]

R. C. Majumdar tells us that Muḥammad's lenient policy towards the Hindus was not only against the injunctions of the Qur'ān, but also in defiance to Ḥajjāj's orders which he sent to the former on his victory at Raor. Ḥajjāj's letter reads as following : "The Great God says in the Qur'ān : 'O true believers, when you encounter the unbelievers, strike off their heads.' The above command of the Great God is a great command and must be respected and followed. You should not be so fond of showing mercy, as to nullify the virtue of the act. Henceforth grant pardon to no one of the enemy and spare none of them, or else all will consider you a weak-minded man."[75] After the conquest of the whole of Sindh, Muḥammad allowed the Hindus to repair their old temples and build new ones.[76]

The second important step taken by Muḥammad b. Qāsim toward understanding and amity between the Hindus and the Muslims was the ban put on the killing of cows. "The reason may have been a simple desire to preserve the cattle wealth", remarks a writer, "but regard for Hindu sentiments may also

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73. Cf. HCIP, III, 459-60. The Charter is stated thus: As for the rest of the pople (Muḥammad b. Qāsim had already offered pardon to some Brāhmans on condition that they would find out the queen of Dāhar and produce her before him), a tax was levied on them under the rules laid down by the holy Prophet of God (may the blessings of God be on him and his descendants). He who received the honour of Islām and became a convert was exempt from slavery as well as tribute and was not injured. Those, however, who did not accept the true faith were compelled to pay the fixed tax (*jizya*). These latter were divided by him into three classes. The first and highest class had to pay 48 *dirhams* of silver in weight per head. The second, or the middle class, had to pay 24 *dirhams* in weight, and the third, or the lowest class, had to pay 12 *dirhams* in weight only. He then dismissed them with the following words: "I let you go this day. Those among you who become Musalmāns and come within the fold of Islām shall have their tribute remitted, but those who are still inclined to be of their own faith, must put up with injuries (*gazand*) and tribute (*jizya*) to retain the religion of their fathers and grandfathers." (cf. *ibid.*, referred to *Chachnāma*, I, 164-65); Also see Ikrām, p. 11; H. R. Haig, *JRAS*, XVI (1884), 281-94.

74. *Op. cit.*, p. 151.

75. HCIP, III, 458.

76. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 460.

have been partly responsible for this step."[77] Muḥammad's policy was, however, approved of by a letter of Ḥajjāj.[78]

R. C. Majumdar is one of those historians who commend the policy of Muḥammad b. Qāsim in India. Thus Majumdar says, "The attitude of the Muslim conqueror of Sindh towards its people serves as a general pattern of Muslim policy towards the subject Hindus in subsequent ages." "Something no doubt", continues the same historian, "depended upon individual rulers; some of them adopted a more liberal, others a more cruel and intolerant attitude."[79] "The one redeeming feature of his [Muḥammad b. Qāsim] policy", concludes Majumdar, "was the right given to the Hindus to worship freely at their temples. This is all the more noteworthy as very scant regard was paid to it by many Muslim rulers of India in later ages."[80]

The result of the conquest of Sindh was in the words of Majumdar, "The defeat of Dāhar and the conquest of Sindh by Muḥammad-bin-Qāṣim in A. D. 712,..., opened the floodgates of Muslim colonisation in this remote corner of India."[81] Muḥammad is reported to have settled 4,000 Muslim colonists in the city of Debāl and built a mosque there.[82]

However, the actual interaction that took place between the two communities in Sindh was witnessed by the Arab geographer- travellers. Mas'ūdī, who visited Sindh in 915 A.D., and Ibn Hawqal, who visited Sindh some years later, have left for us wonderful accounts of Hindu-Muslim relationships.[83]

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77. Ikrām, p. 17.

78. The letter of Ḥajjāj reads as following: "Because after they have become *dhimmīs* (protected subjects) we have no right whatever to interfere with their lives or their property. Do, therefore, permit them to build the temples of those they worship. No one is prohibited from or punished for following his own religion, and let no one prevent them from doing so, so that they may live happily in their own homes" (*Chach-nāma*, I, 168-69, cited in HCIP, III, 460).

79. *Ibid.*, p. 461.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 462.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 457.

82. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 170. The sea-port of Debāl cannot be definitely identified. According to some it occupied the site of modern Thattah, while others locate it at Bhambor on the North bank of the Gharo Creeks, and 3 1/2 miles to the West of the village of Gharo in the *taluq* of Mirpūr Sakro (cf. HCIP, III, 170).

83. See W. Anderson, "Translation of Ibn Houkul's Account of Scind", *JRAS*, XXI (1852), 49-74; Ibn Hawqal, KMM. Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum, Leiden, 1873, 2 vols.

They tell us that the Muslims had mosques in all important places, such as Manṣūra, Multān, Debāl, Nirun (modern Ḥaydarābād, Sindh), etc., and the non-Muslims (*Dhimmīs*) constituted the bulk of the population. The relations between them were cordial. Some Hindu chiefs showed an interest in Islām, "for in 886 a Hindu Rājāh commissioned an Arab linguist from Manṣūra to translate the Qur'ān into the local language."[84] According to Mas'ūdī, the Arab ruler of Sindh used dress similar to that of the Hindu Rājāhs, and, like them, he wore earrings and kept his hair long.[85]

The second wave of the Muslim conquest of India was begun by Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna at the opening of the eleventh century. The destructive policy which Maḥmūd followed in the course of his seventeen expeditions to India (1001-1030) is so well-known that it hardly needs any description here. Any standard history book of India testifies to it.[86]

But one contemporary Muslim figure who disapproved of Maḥmūd's destructive expeditions was Al-Birūnī (d. 1010). He was perhaps the first of a few pioneers of Hindu-Muslim amity and friendship at that time. He had no praise for Maḥmūd's expeditions, but rather spoke of him as having "utterly ruined the prosperity of the country, and performed there wonderful exploits, by which Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions."[87] Since he was not much interested in the wars of Maḥmūd, he engaged himself in studying Hindu religion and philosophy, and tried to familiarise himself with their manners and customs. He seems to have studied Sanskrit thoroughly.

Reference has already been made, in the words of Majumdar, to the general attitudes of the Muslim rulers of India towards their Hindu subjects. Among the Muslim Sulṭāns of India, Muḥammad b. Tughluq (r. 1325-51) was the first who pursued a conciliatory policy towards the Hindus.[88] During the last

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84. See Nadvī, A. Z., TS, 196 as ref. by Ikrām, p. 17.

85. Referred to by Ikrām, p. 18.

86. See Elliot and Dowson, II, 434; Firishtah, Muḥammad Qāsim ibn Hindū Shāh, Astarabī, *History of the Rise of Muḥammadan Power in India*, tr. John Briggs, Vol. I, Calcutta, 1958; MIMR, 9-23.

87. Sachau, p. 22.

88. See Majumdar, HCIP, VI, 86.

phase of the Delhi Sulṭanate, Sikandar Lūdhī (r. 1489-1517) ceased to discriminate between Hindu and Muslim in making appointments to state services.[89]

Summing up the general policy of the Muslim Sulṭāns of India, *vis-a-vis* their attitude to the question of proselytism, it may be mentioned that on the whole, partly for administrative reasons and partly as a matter of tolerance, they "adopted a general attitude of neutrality to the problem of conversion; though some of them exercised political persuasion from time to time, such as the promise of immunity if an adversary at bay accepted Islām."[90] Muḥammad b. Tughluq, for example, though strongly opposed to forced conversions, yet considered the peaceful propagation of Islām by the Ṣūfīs as meritorious virtue.[91] Firūz Shāh Tughluq (r. 1351-88) was one of the very few Sulṭāns who showed any interest in proselytism.[92]

The Mughal period of India (1526-1858) falls outside the scope of this work. The contribution made by emperor Akbar (r. 1556-1605) and Prince Dārā Shikoh (d. 1659) in their efforts to make a fusion of Hindu and Muslim religion and culture is so well-known that it hardly needs any description. Any general introduction to Indian History testifies to this fact.[93]

Since the religious contact is vitally important for this work, we propose to discuss it in detail in the next chapter. Summing up the three kinds of contacts, viz., intellectual, commercial and political, that took place between India and Islām, we find that Indian ideas and sciences influenced the Muslims even outside India. Indian books were taken to the Muslim world, where they were translated into Muslim languages. Thus India made a significant contribution to the intellectual awakening of the early Muslims. When the Muslim traders-missionaries came to India they established cordial relations with the Hindus. Many Muslims settled in India and peace-

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89. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 146, 147.
90. SICI, 82.
91. Cf. *ibid.*
92. See HCIP, VI, 105
93. Cf. 'Abdul Qādir Badāyūnī in Elliot and Dowson Vol. V, 1873, 477-549; Chaudhury, Roma, CSDS; Sharma, S. R., RPME; J. M. Kumarappa, AP, II (1931), 348-53; V. A. Smith, *JRAS*, XL (1917), 715-22.

fully carried out their business—commercial as well as religious. As a result of the preaching of Islām by the Muslim traders, many Hindus accepted Islām. Intermarriage took place between the Hindus and the Muslims. The presence of these Muslims alongside the Hindus in the Indian society engendered a general atmosphere of amity and concord between them. Consequently there took place interaction and assimilation of ideas between the two communities. The Muslim missionaries stimulated and revitalised Indian *bhakti* ideas, the result was the *bhakti* movement.

The initial stage of the political contact between India and the Muslims was one of hostility and warfare. But after the establishment of Muslim rule, the initial stage of hostility was followed by a period of understanding and accommodation. However, the secular authorities did not make any big contribution to the preaching of Islām. By and large, for expediency, the Sulṭāns adopted a policy of neutrality in respect to proselytism. Hence one writer remarks, "It is not in the cruelties of the persecutor or the fury of the fanatic that we should look for evidence of the missionary spirit of Islām, any more than in the exploits of that mythical personage, the Muslim warrior with sword in one hand and Qur'ān in the other—but in the quiet, inobtrusive labours of the preacher and the trader."[94] The role of the Muslim rulers in preaching Islām has been exaggerated beyond all proportions whereas the part played by the Muslim trader-missionaries and the Ṣūfīs was not properly recognised. It goes without saying that by the might of arms the Muslim rulers certainly conquered the land of India for themselves, but definitely not the heart of Indians for Islām. For Islām as a religio-social system the hearts of Indians were won by the Ṣūfīs and missionaries who preached the doctrine of *sulḥ-kul* (peace with all). Thus a renowned Indian writer says, "The might of Muslim arms certainly conquered, eventually, the whole of Indian territory; and even many Hindus got converted to Islām for one reason or the other. But the Muslim monarchs or the conquerors could never conquer the hearts of Indians. It needed the

94. SICI, 83.

coming of Maḥommedan saints and *sādhakas* (*'ābid*) for accomplishing such a piece of work."[95]

Before dealing with the religious contact which took place between the two faiths on the mystical level, it may be mentioned here that the Ṣūfīs did not come to India with Muslim armies, rather they migrated to India from other Muslim countries as individual preachers; they had little to do with those who were at the helm of political and military affairs.[96] Having kept themselves aloof from the Muslim administration, these Ṣūfīs devoted themselves to religious matters, and thus played the most vitally important role in spreading Islām in India peacefully, and in creating a favourable atmosphere which led to an understanding, amity, assimilation and the interaction between the two communities of Hindus and the Muslims. Their interaction stimulated the *bhakti* ideas, as a result the *Bhakti Movement*—a movement of devotional religion propagated by Hindu and Muslim mystics combinedly—took place. Some of the *bhakti* leaders, such as Kabīr, received special character.

Before concluding this chapter, we would emphasise that the interaction between Hinduism and Islām on the orthodox level did not take place as deeply as it did on the mystical level. On the former level, although some kind of interaction did take place, it was peripheral and more or less superficial as we have noticed. The gulf between the two faiths was still wide, and it was only the mystics of the two religions who made sincere and sustained efforts to bridge that gulf on the basis of *bhakti*. Hence Kshitimohan Sen contends :

> Hinduism and Islām, strictly bound by the tenets of their own scriptures, had no points of contact (religiously) with each other. They were like the two banks of a river separated by the stream that flows between them. Who was to build the connecting bridge ? The orthodox Hindus as well as the orthodox Moḥammedans were unfit for this

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95. Sen, K., MMI, 10. The term "*Sādhaka*" in Hindi means "One who is in the path of realisation". The equivalent word in Arabic and Persian and also in Urdū is "*Ābid*".

96. See 'Azīz Aḥmad, "The Ṣūfī and the Sultān in pre-Mughal Muslim India", *Der Islām*, XXXVIII (1-2 : 1962), 142-53.

task, and it was left to the free spirits and lovers of humanity from both these groups, the Hindu *bhaktas* and Moḥammedan Ṣūfīs, to devote their lives to the construction of this bridge.[97]

And Kabīr, the subject of our special study, was one of those Ṣūfī-*bhaktas* who made a genuine effort in bringing the two communities together by bridging the gulf. For these reasons, the following chapter is very important for understanding the nature of interaction.

97. CHI, IV, 387, also see 553-54, 616.

CHAPTER II

The Interaction of Hindu-Muslim Ideas on the Mystical Level

MYSTICISM has been variously defined. But there is agreement that no matter to what religion or nationality a mystic belongs, mysticism as a religion of personal experience tends toward universality. Thus Evelyn Underhill writes :

> Though mystical theologies of the East and the West differ widely—though the ideas of life which they hold out to the soul differ too—yet in the experience of the saint this conflict is seen to be transcended. When the love of God is reached, divergencies become impossible, for the soul has passed beyond the sphere of the manifold and is immersed in the one Reality.[1]

The mystics of all religions are essentially the same in their mystical quest. "One cannot honestly say", observes Underhill, "that there is any wide difference between the Brāhman, the Ṣūfī or the Christian mystics at their best."[2] This view has been corroborated by many writers like R. C. Zaehner[3] and A. J. Arberry. The latter says, "It has become a platitude to observe that mysticism is essentially one and the same, whatever may be the religion professed by the individual msytic : a constant and unvarying phenomenon of the universal yearning of the human spirit for personal communion with God."[4] The fact that in certain mystical attitudes the mystics of all religions are agreed is fundamental. Hence, it is not surprising that the mystics of Hinduism and Islām should stand on the same ground and preach the same doctrine.

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1. *Introduction to the Autobiography of Maharshi Devendranāth Tagore* (tr. Satyendranath Tagore and Indira Devi from original Bengali), London, 1914, p. xi.
2. EME, 4.
3. MSP, lx.
4. *Ṣūfism*, p. 11. For a similar statement also see Brown, E.G., YAP, 136; Smith M., IHM, 2. p. 2; William James, "Mysticism", in *The Varieties of Religious Experience : A Study in Human Nature*, London, 1969, pp. 299-336; Ranade, R.D., PGHL, 2.

We propose to first discuss briefly Islamic mysticism (Ṣūfīsm), and then Hindu mysticism. But we do not intend to discuss either mysticism as such, rather, we shall concentrate on those elements of Ṣūfīsm and Hindu mysticism which represented some expression of mysticism that seemed to have disregarded all orthodox religions and doctrines. That mystical attitude moved towards an atmosphere of freedom from orthodoxies and concurrently a commonly sharable community of mystical attitudes upon which a new kind of inter-mystical spirituality could be grounded. This discussion will help us to point out those elements which led to Kabīr's supra-denominational mysticism as the culmination of the process of the interaction between the two mysticisms. While discussing Ṣūfīsm, we shall draw attention to two things : (1) contact of Ṣūfīsm with Indian ideas outside India and (2) the development of heretical, or to be precise, not-in-conformity-with-the Islamic Sharī'ah ideas among some individual Ṣūfīs. The same phenomenon, that is, the development of non-orthodox ideas among some Hindu mystic-*bhaktas* will also be examined. Finally, we will also try to point out that the Ṣūfīs at first borrowed some of the Indian mystical ideas and later contributed to Hindu mysticism through *bhakti*-mysticism.

Basically, Ṣūfīsm (*taṣawwuf*) is rooted in the Qur'ān[5] and the life of Muḥammad.[6] The Meccan *Sūras* (chs.) are replete with a devotional feeling and one of Allāh's name is *Wadūd* (Q. 85.14) which is suggestive of the relation of love between man and God. The Ṣūfī practice of *Dhikr* (devotional recitation or rememberance of the names and attributes of God) is derived from the practice of the Qur'ān recitation (*qirā'a*),[7] and probably not, as has been suggested, a borrowing from Christian or Buddhist sources.[8] J. C. Archer suggests that the famous Persian Ṣūfī Jalād-ud-Dīn Rūmī (d. 1273) may

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5. See 2.165, 109, 182, 177, 186; 3.31, 123; 5.59; 9.119; 17.1; 24.35-42; 53.4-18; 74 *passim*; 94; 96 *passim*; Massignon, L., *Essai sur les origines du lexique technique de la mystique musulmane* (hereafter cited as *Essai sur les origines*), Paris, 1922, pp. 88-89; Nicholson, R. A., MI, 8.; "Taṣawwuf", SEI, 579-83; Fazlur Raḥmān, *Islām*, London, 1966, 128-49.

6. Cf. Archer, J. C., MEM; also see *Ṣūfism*, pp. 13, 24-26, 28-29.

7. See *Essai sur les origines*, p. 85; D. B. Macdonald, "Dhikr", *SEI*, p. 75.

8. Cf. Nicholson, R. A., IPS, 10, 23; MI, 10.

have had in mind some genuine Qur'ānic or Traditional passage when he says that God declared to Muḥammad, "I am not contained in ought above or below, I am not contained in earth or sky, or even in highest heaven. Know this for surety, O, beloved. Yet am I contained in the believer's heart."[9] The *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* contains a similar idea (cf. 4. 17).

The central core of Islamic teaching is the *tawḥīd* (unity of God), "that He has no partners or equals to share or contest His Omnipotence, that He admits the right of none to vary His Decrees or intercede with His judgements. Islām recognises no incarnate God, no Saviour; the matter lies between Allāh, the one Lord (*Rabb*), and every man His creature and servant (*'abd*)."[10] Another conspicuous feature of Ṣūfīsm has been absolute trust in and dependence on God (*tawakkul 'ala Allāh*).

So far we have noted that the five most important features of Ṣūfīsm are : (1) unity of God, (2) the love affairs between God and devotee, (3) the *dhikr*. (4) absolute dependence on God's mercy, and (5) the God is contained nowhere but in the believer's heart. All these concepts are most oft-mentioned themes in Kabīr's teaching, as we shall see. But while the Ṣūfīs regard the Qur'ān as the supreme authority to which they turn for guidance and justification, Kabīr rejects it as something useless. This is one of the reasons why Kabīr is seen by Muslims as different from the Ṣūfīs even though he was one of them.

In its development, however, Ṣūfīsm seems to have come under Christian and Hindu-Buddhist influences. (Christian influence falls outside the scope of this work). But in the face of all external influences, early Ṣūfīsm owed its firm obedience to Islamic *Sharī'ah* (law of orthodox Islām), and remained strictly monotheistic throughout its history. Thus A. J. Arberry maintains, "...while mysticism is undoubtedly a universal constant, its variations can be observed to be very clearly and characteristically shaped by the several religious systems upon which they were based. In this varied company Ṣūfīsm may be defined as the mystical movement of an

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9. *Op. cit.*, p. 40; also see *Ṣūfīsm*, p. 28; MI, 68.
10. *Ṣūfīsm*, p. 12; also see B. D. Macdonald, "Tawḥīd", *SEI*, pp. 586-87.

uncompromising Monotheism."[11]

During the earlier phase of Ṣūfīsm, the Ṣūfīs were only individuals who dedicated their lives to devotion to God. However, Ṣūfīsm gradually carved its own way (*ṭarīqat*) for following religion, which is somewhat different from orthodox Islām (*sharī'at*)[12]. Eventually, Ṣūfīsm came to be a movement not strictly bound by *sharī'ah*. Its partial freedom from the obligation of *sharī'ah*, in its later phase, allowed some Ṣūfīs to adopt a latitudinarian attitude towards Islām, on the one hand, and adopt a liberal attitude to other religions, on the other. Hence a western expert describes Ṣūfīsm as something "which essentially is not a system based on authority and tradition, but a free movement assuming infinitely various forms in obedience to the inner light of the individual soul."[13] The two tendencies of Ṣūfīsm mentioned above namely, liberal attitudes to Islām and to other religions, are the very keys, it may be pointed out here, which encouraged Kabīr to preach the theory of one religion for both Hindus and the Muslims. It may be noted in passing that in the course of time (from the eleventh century onwards), Ṣūfīsm was organised into different schools or orders freely preaching and intermingling with the people of other religions, e.g. Hinduism and Buddhism in India, and developing divergent tendencies, and assimilating more and more alien ideas which the Ṣūfīs incorporated in their religious life. Orthodox Islām, and also orthodox Ṣūfīsm, classify Ṣūfīsm into *Bā-shara'* (conforming to orthodox Islām) and *Bi-shara'* (not conforming to orthodox Islām). Indian Ṣūfīsm represents both the groups; and according to this standard of classification, Kabīr belongs to the latter group, as we shall see later.

We have briefly traced above the fundamental features of Ṣūfīsm. Now let us illustrate them by citing the life and teaching of some individual Ṣūfīs. This is important for our purpose, for it will help us to see how Ṣūfīsm, having come in

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11. *Ṣūfism*, p. 12; also see R. A. Nicholson, "A Historical Enquiry concerning the Origin and Development of Ṣūfīsm", *JRAS*, N.S., XXXVIII (1906), 303-48.

12. See L. Massignon, "Ṭarīḳa", and J. Schacht, "Sharī'a", *SEI*, respectively pp. 573-78; 524-29; Fazlur Raḥmān, "The Sharī'a", pp. 100-116.

13. Nicholson, R. A., SIM, 11; also see Fazlur Raḥmān, "Ṣūfī Organizations," pp. 150-66.

contact with Indian ideas, developed *bi-shara'* or heterodox ideas, on the one hand, and gradually led to Kabīr's supra-denominational mysticism which advocated the unification of Hinduism and Islām on the basis of *bhakti*.

One of the earliest renowned Ṣūfīs (the first person to bear the title Ṣūfī) was Abū Hāshim of Kūfa (d. 778) a famous woman of Baṣra ('Irāq), known as Rābi'ah (d. 185/801). With her name is generally associated the first enunciation in Ṣūfīsm of the doctrine of Divine Love, which later came to be a dominant feature of Ṣūfism. She is reported to have said:

Two ways I love Thee : selfishly,
And next, as worthy as of Thee.
'T is selfish love that I do naught
Save think on Thee with every thought.
'T is purest love when Thou dost raise
The veil to my adoring gaze.
Not mine the praise in that or this :
Thine is the praise in both, I wis.[14]

Rābi'ah was so absorbed in her love for God that she rejected all marriage offers declaring that she did not have any phenomenal existence but existed in God and was totally His.[15]

Rābi'ah was so overwhelmed by her consciousness of the near presence of God that when she was asked about the cause of her sickness, she replied : "By God, I know of no cause for my illness, except that paradise was displayed to me, and I yearned after it in my heart; and I think that my Lord was jealous of me, and so reproached me; and only He can make me happy."[16] Her celebrated prayer is : "O God ! if I worship Thee in fear of Hell, burn me in Hell; and if I worship Thee in hope of Paradise, exclude me from Paradise, but if I worship Thee for Thine own sake, withhold not Thine Everlasting Beauty."[17]

This idea of Rābi'ah that a Ṣūfī does not worship God in the hope of either hell or heaven, but purely for the sake of God, came to be a recurrent theme in the teaching of all Ṣūfīs.[18]

14. *Ṣūfism*, p. 43; also see R. A., Nicholson, in LI, 213-14.
15. See 'Aṭṭār, Farīd-ud-Dīn, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyā*, I, 66 cited in *Ṣūfism*, p. 42.
16. *Ibid*.
17. MI, 115.
18. In fact, the idea that a Ṣūfī does not bother about hell or heaven but for God's love can be traced even before Rābi'ah Ḥasan al-Baṣrī

This doctrine of Divine Love is in an interesting way at the heart of the idea of *bhakti*. In the teachings of Kabīr we shall want to examine the concept of *bhakti* in the light of this Ṣūfī tradition.

Another early Ṣūfī was Dhū-al-Nūn of Egypt (d. 246/861). In his poetry, we find the use of the same passionate language of the devoted lover as Rābī'ah had used before.[19]

But orthodox Islām was no longer to remain heedless to these utterances of the Ṣūfīs. There is some truth in the opinion that Islām was not a congenial soil for the growth of mysticism as R. C. Zaehner argues.[20] The hostility between *Ṭarīqat* and *Sharī'at* started at the very beginning of Ṣūfism (9th cent.), and persisted until Al-Ghazzālī (d. 1111) tried to patch up the differences and make them acceptable to each other. Thus a writer says, "Leaders of orthodoxy, both Shī'ah and Sunnī, were opposed to Ṣūfism because of its eclectic doctrines, and it was only Ghazzālī's powerful personality and brilliant intellect which induced the orthodox to accept Ṣūfism within its fold."[21]

One of the first points on which the difference began between the two groups was the conception of God. According to Ṣūfism, God can be felt and loved by any one who faithfully attends to His call with a loving heart and devotion; and the sincere and wholehearted loving devotion (*bhakti*) to God eventually leads to a union with Him which is the goal of Ṣūfism and all mysticism. This contention of Ṣūfism, of course, overlooked the transcendent understanding of God, which the Qur'ān advocates, and brought forth His immanence.

The orthodox theologians, on the contrary, maintain that God is transcendent : wholly other and totally different from any created thing : "Like unto Him hath there never been anyone"

(642-728), for instance, is quoted to have said : "I have not served God from fear of hell for I should be a wretched hireling if I served Him from fear; not from love of heaven for I should be a bad servant if I served for what is given; I have served Him only for love of Him and desire for Him", (cited by De Bary, Wm. T., SIT, 412; also see Anonymus, "al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī", *SEI*, p. 136; R. A. Nicholson, "The Goal of Muhammadan Mysticism," *JRAS*, XLV (1913), 55-68.

19. See *Ṣūfism*, pp. 53-54;————, "Dhū'l-Nūn", *SEI*, p. 77; also cf. *Essai sur les origines*, p. 187.

20. Cf. HMM, 2-3, 91 ; also see Bhagi, M. L. MICT, 212-13.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 220-21; also see D. B. Macdonald, "al-Ghazzālī"., *SEI*, pp. 111-13.

(Q. 112.4). Naturally, there could be love and union only between like and like and not between God and man. The Qur'ānic allusion to love (2.165; 3.31), however, means, according to orthodox Islām, no more than obedience.[22] Therefore, to talk of love and union between God and man, according to *Sharī'ah*, is to commit heresy. Consequently, Ṣūfīs like Dhū-al-Nūn Miṣrī (Egyptian), Abū'l Ḥusayn al-Nūrī were arraigned before the Caliph of Baghdād on suspicion of heresy;[23] and for still bolder utterances Ṣūfīs like Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj[24] and Suhrawardī al-Maqtūl were summarily executed.[25]

Now let us examine the case of some Ṣūfīs who seem to have come in contact with Indian ideas more closely. It has been previously indicated tht Ṣūfīsm came in contact with Hindu and Buddhist mystical ideas, after most of its principal ideas had been developed either in its original Islamic tradition or by the influx of neo-Platonic and Christian elements. The earliest contacts between Buddhism and Ṣūfīsm seem to have taken place in the north-west Persian and Central Asian marches of the 'Abbāside Caliphate. According to an Indian writer, prior to the impact of Islamic culture, the land of Persia was permeated with Vedāntic and Buddhist ideas.[26] There is some historical truth in this statement as attested by the fact that King Aśoka sent his sons to propagate Buddhism in Kandahār, Afghānistān and Persia as well as in Ceylon. "In about 259 B.C.", says Vincent A. Smith, "Aśoka took the momentous resolution of organizing a network of preaching missions to spread the teaching of the Buddha, not only throughout India, but in the distant regions of Western Asia, Eastern Europe, and Northern Africa".[27] R.C. Majumdar gives an

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22. Cf. HMM, 91.
23. See *ibid.*, p. 4.
24. See Massignon, L., AMMI, I, 291-330.
25. Nicholson, R.A., LHA, 275.
26. Bhagi, p. 221.
27. *Aśoka : The Buddhist Emperor of India*, 3rd ed., Oxford,[1919], p. 42. The Rock Edict XIII, published with the rest of the Fourteen Rock Edicts in 256 B. C., gives a detailed list of the countries to which the imperial missionaries of the Law of Piety had been dispatched. The missionaries were sent to the domains of Antiochos Theos, King of Syria and Western Asia (B. C. 261-246); Ptolemy Philadelphos, King of Egypt (B. C. 285-247); Magas, King of Cyrene in Northern Africa (B. C. 285-258).

enlightening account of India's cultural influence in Central Asia which he calls "Ser-India."[28] On the authority of the accounts given by the Chinese travellers, such as Fa-hien and Hiuen Tsang, the same historian tells us that there were many Brāhmanical and Buddhist families settled down in Kuchi, Balkh, modern Afghānistān and other places of Central Asia[29]. According to Hiuen Tsang, there were hundreds of Buddhist monasteries and Hindu temples in Irān.[30] We also learn from Arab chronicles that Khālid, the Wazīr of the 'Abbāsid Caliph al-Manṣūr, was the son of a *Barmak*, i.e. chief priest in a Buddhist monastery in Balkh called Nawbahār.[31]

The above view has been affirmed by writers like R. A. Nicholson and I. Goldziher. Nicholson draws our attention to those "flourishing Buddhist monasteries in Balkh, the metropolis of ancient Bactria, a city famous for the number of Ṣūfīs who resided in it."[32] Goldziher notices the significant circumstance that the Ṣūfī ascetic Ibrāhim ibn Adham, a prince of Balkh, who abandoned his throne and became a wandering mendicant — "the story of Buddha over again".[33] Goldziher also calls attention to analogies between the "noble path" of Buddhism and "path" (*ṭarīqah*) of Ṣūfīsm; between the Ṣūfī "concentration" (*murāqabah*) and the Buddhist "*dhayāna.*"[34] Goldziher also regards the Ṣūfī interpretation of

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The Ceylonese chronicles, the earliest of which was composed by Buddhist monks about six centuries after the Edicts, give a list of the countries and add the names of the missionaries (cf. *ibid.*, p. 44). Also see Gokhale, B. G., *Aśoka Maurya*, New York, 1966, pp. 79-80; Majumdar, R. C., *Ancient India*, rev. ed., Delhi, 1964, p. 111; J. M. Kumarappa, AP, II (1931), 774-79.

28. HCIP, III, 627.

29. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 29-33.

30. See *ibid.*, pp. 640-41.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 630. The Arab conqueror of Balkh captured Khālid's mother in 705. The son was converted to Islām and founded the famous Barmaki family. Khālid ibn Barmak came to occupy the highest office under the Caliph, and his son and two grandsons practically ruled the 'Abbāside Empire from 786-803. They were instrumental in introducing Indian astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and other sciences into the Muslim world.

32. MIN, 16.

33. MI, 175; also see R. A. Nicholson, "Ibrāhim b. Adham", *SEI*, pp. 155-56; H. Beveridge, "Ibrāhim b. Adham", *JRAS*, XLI (1909), 751-52. For Islamic asceticism, see A. J. Wensinck, "Ahl al-Ṣuffa", *SEI*, p. 17; L. Massignon, "Zuhd", *SEI*, p. 661.

34. Cf. MI, 16.

Divine unity (*tawḥīd*) as "fundamentally different from" the Islamic monotheistic conception of God, and as borrowed from Indian theosophy.[35] Ṣūfī robes and the use of rosaries are also considered to have been a borrowing from Buddhism. Thus Nicholson maintains, "The Ṣūfīs learned the use of rosaries from Buddhist monks, and, without entering into details, it may be safely asserted that the method of Ṣūfīsm, so far as it is one of ethical self-culture, ascetic meditation, and intellectual abstraction, owes a good deal to Buddhism."[36]

It has already been indicated that the fundamental principles of Ṣūfīsm are Islamic in origin. The Indian elements that we have just discussed were secondary elements adopted by some non-orthodox Ṣūfīs. According to the classification of Ṣūfīsm into orthodox and heterodox schools, the latter were more than willing to adopt anything with which they came in contact. Hence it is our contention that the interaction between Ṣūfīsm and Hinduism, and for that matter also Buddhism, took place more freely on the heterodox Ṣūfī level than on the orthodox level.

However, the first person who seems to have been influenced by Hindu-Buddhist ideas, not peripherally but fundamentally, was Abū Yazīd of Bistām (Persia, d. 261/875), a Ṣūfī of heterodox views. He is said to have learned some Indian ideas from his teacher, Abū 'Alī Sindhī. There is a great deal of controversy among scholars about the historicity of Abū Yazīd's contact with Indian ideas.

The conception of Divine Unity and *Fanā* (annihilation or passing away), which appear in Abū Yazīd's utterances, have been explained as of Vedāntic and Buddhist origin. Thus Nicholson emphatically says, "The Ṣūfī conception of the passing away (*fanā*) of the individual self in Universal Being is certainly, I think, Indian. Its first great exponent was the Persian mystic, Bāyzīd of Bistām, who may have received it from his teacher, Abū 'Alī of Sind (scinde)."[37] This view has been defended by Missignon,[38] Zaehner,[39] and Goldziher

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35. See *ibid.*, p. 176 referred to by 'Azīz Aḥmad, SICIE, 123.
36. MIN, 17.
37. *Ibid.*; also see MI, 174-75.
38. *Essai sur les origines*, n. 3, p. 243 and p. 8.
39. HMM, 94-95.

but rejected recently by Arberry.[40] He suggests that the Ṣūfī got the idea of *fanā* from the Qur'ānic verse : "Everything upon the earth passeth away, save His face" (55.26).[41] Abū Yazīd is reported to have said that he taught Sindhī "Qur'ānic verses necessary for prayer, receiving in exchange instruction in the Divine Unity and the Realities."[42]

The root of the controversy as to whether or not Abū Yazīd was affected by Indian ideas is the place-name of Abū 'Alī, "Sindhi", the home of Abū 'Alī. Those who are in favour of Indian influence understand by it the province of Sindh in India; whereas those who are against such influence take "Sind" to be a village in Khurāsān for which Yāqūṭ is their authority.[43] On this point nothing can be said conclusively. If we take "Sind" a village of Khurāsān as the home of Abū 'Alī, it is nearer to Abū Yazīd's home, Bistām. But if we take "Sind" the province of India there is nothing to prevent Abū 'Alī from travelling from Sindh (India) to Bistām (Persia) for mystics often travel too from place to place. All the early Indian Ṣūfīs were non-Indian by birth, and the name Abū 'Alī sounds non-Indian. In any event, even if Abū 'Alī was not an Indian, the possibility of Indian influence on Bāyzīd cannot be summarily ruled out, for most historians agree that Persia and Central Asia were permeated by Hindu-Buddhist ideas before the coming of Islām. Moreover, from Bāyzīd's writings themselves nothing definite can be decided.

But Zaehner seems to have gone too far in suggesting that Abū 'Alī was possibly "A convert to Islām from another religion" since Abū Yazīd is reported to have taught Abū 'Alī "to perform the obligatory duties of Islām." First of all, the last part of the quote is a misinterpretation of what is recorded in *Kitāb al-Luma'*;[45] secondly, in the case of his being a convert, one would expect to see some evidence in Abū

40. Arberry, A. J., RRI, 90-91. For the biographical sources of Bistāmī, see M. Struk, "Al-Bistāmī", EI, I, 733; R. A. Nicholson, "al-Bistāmī", *SEI*, pp. 63-64; H. Ritter, "Abū Yazīd (Bāyazīd) Ṭayfūr B. 'Isā B. Surūshān Al-Bistāmī", *EI*, I, 162-63; Houlum-Schindler, "Al-Bistāmī", *JRAS*, XLI (1909), 161 ff.

41. *Sūfism*, p. 22.

42. RRI, 90.

43 *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, Cairo, 1323/1906, III, 152.

44. HMM, 93-94.

45. The text reads as following: *fa kuntu ulaqqīnuhu mā yaqīmu bihī farḍahu wa kānā yu'allimūnī at-tawḥīda wa ḥaqā'iqa ṣarfan*, p. 177.

Yazīd's own sayings, and also would like to know his pre-conversion name. Zaehner has also suggested that Abū Yazīd came under the influence of Śaṅkara Vedānta, for in one of his sayings, as Sarrāj tells us, Abū Yazīd is reported to have said that God told him : "O Abū Yazīd, verily my creation longs to see thee." And I said : "Adorn me with Thy unity and clothe me in Thine I-ness and raise me up into Thy oneness, so that when Thy creatures see me, they may say : "We have seen thee (i.e. God) and thou art that..."[46] Undoubtedly, this is the famous Sanskrit phrase : *tat tvam asi*, found in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (cf. 6.8.7; etc.)[47] used as a synonym for Brahman ; its Arabic equivalent is *takūnu anta dhāka*. Zaehner is, of course, right in pointing out that in Arabic *Dhāka* is never used as a pronoun of Allāh (God), rather *huwa* (He) is used.[48]

This is a very important parallel between Abū Yazīd's saying and the Vedāntic understanding of Brahman. But from this to conclude that Abū Yazīd was influenced by Śaṅkara's ideas may be too hazardous, for we have no historical evidence that by the ninth century Śaṅkara's (d. 820) ideas had travelled as far as Khurāsān. This position is also held by Professor 'Azīz Aḥmad.[49] But, of course, Śaṅkara is not the originator of the concept : *tat tvam asi*. This is a Vedāntic idea; Śaṅkara was only the interpreter of it. That is to say, if we do not attach Śaṅkara's name to this Upaniṣadic theory, there is nothing improbable in assuming that this ancient Indian idea was known in Persia long before Śaṅkara.

Biṣṭāmī may have been influenced by Buddhism, nonetheless *fanā* cannot be identified with Nirvāṇa. Although both terms imply the passing-away of individuality, Nirvāṇa is purely negative, while *fanā* is accompanied by *baqā*, everlasting life in God.[50]

Abū Yazīd is reported to have said : "Thirty years the high God was my mirror, now I am my own mirror." According to his biographer's explanation, the above statement means :

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46. Quoted in HMM, 94; also see RRI, 95.
47. See Radhakrishnan, S. (ed.) PU, 485. *Tat tvam asi* is translated: "That art thou."
48. HMM, 94.
49. See SICIE, 124.
50. Cf. MIN, 18, 149.

"That which I was I am no more, for 'I' and 'God' is a denial of the unity of God. Since I am no more, the high God is His own mirror."[51] Abū Yazīd once said, "I went from God to God, until they cried from me in me, 'O Thou I !"

Commenting on the above verse, Nicholson says : "This, it would be observed, is not Buddhism, but the pantheism of the Vedānta."[52] In concluding his observation, Nicholson further asserts : "I think we may conclude that the Ṣūfī theory of *fanā* was influenced to some extent by Buddhism as well as by Perso-Indian Pantheism."[53]

There are many verses in which Abū Yazīd describes his union with God and identifies himself with God.[54] Judging from these narratives, it is reasonable to believe that Abū Yazīd must have passed through experiences in which he felt himself to be at one with God. And "it was this overpowering sensation of being rapt into the Godhead", says Arberry, "that caused him to utter such blasphemies, so detestable to the orthodox, as his notorious *Subḥānī ! Mā a'ẓama shā'nī !*" (Glory be to Me ! How great is My majesty !).[55]

On account of the scandal to orthodox Islām caused by his ecstatic utterances, Abū Yazīd was banished from his homeland seven times.[56] Notwithstanding his blasphemous sayings, he did not renounce Islām; in fact, he is said to have performed the pilgrimage to Mecca forty-five times. This account may be legendary,[57] but all writers are in agreement that he interpreted some of the verses of the Qur'ān, (e.g. 53.4-17), and maintained that Muḥammad had a vision of God, not Gabriel as the traditional interpretation holds.[58]

However, having reached the highest stage of spiritual progress, Bistāmī, showed his negligence towards formal religion. Worship, prayers, devotion and all religious duties are for

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51. Cited in *ibid.*, pp. 17-18; also see RRI, 96.
52. MIN, 18.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 19. The definitions of *fanā* as a moral state and that of *Nirvāṇa* as given by Professor Rhys Davids have been compared and shown that apart from the doctrine of *Karma*, which is alien to Ṣūfism, they agree almost word for word.
54. Cf. RRI, 96-103.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 97, also see *Essai sur les origines*, p. 249.
56. Cf. HMM, 116.
57. See A. J. Arberry, *JRAS*, LXX (1938), 89-91.
58. See RRI, 91.

ordinary believers, and not for one who is completely absorbed in the love of God. He does not go to Mecca, rather Mecca comes to him.[59]

Bāyzīd's sayings have a striking similarity with those of Kabīr, though, as we shall see, the former was not as severe as the latter in rejecting formal Islām.

We have discussed Bistāmī at some length for an obvious reason. It seems fairly certain that Bistāmī was the first Ṣūfī to come under Hindu-Buddhist mystical influences and through him those Indian mystical ideas passed on to later Ṣūfīs. "Abū Yazīd had injected into the body of Ṣūfīsm", says Zaehner, "a dose of the Indian Vedānta that was soon to transform the whole movement. It was now within the power of every Ṣūfī to realise himself as God, and this entitled him to live in total disregard of the Muslim religious law."[60] Bāyzīd's sayings established in Ṣūfīsm the Indian Vedāntic concept of absolute monism, as Roma Chaudhury emphasises.[61] This monistic tendency is found in many later Ṣūfīs.

Another heterodox Ṣūfī of great repute was Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), who used much bolder language than Bistāmī and jolted the whole Muslim world by his strange ideas. Thus a writer says, "The man who produced the greatest stir in the Islamic world by the boldness of his doctrines was Ḥusayn bin Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj."[62] His theories were later worked up by many renowned Ṣūfīs.[63]

Ḥallāj visited Sindh (India)[64] to study the subject of Indian magic, and is said to have written as many as forty-six books on it.[65] He was treated as a heretic when he started preaching as an apostle of God. He was arrested, flogged, tortured and finally beheaded and burnt to ashes by the 'Abbāsid authorities.

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59. Cf. HMM, 108; also see Chaudhury, Roma, SGSD, 55.
60. HMM, 119-20.
61. *Op. cit.*, p. 50.
62. Tara Chand, IIIC, 69.
63. Ibn al-'Arabī, 'Abdul Karīm Jillī, Ibn al-Farīd and Abū Sa'īd ibn Abū al-Khayr incorporated his ideas in their works; and Junayd, the famous Ṣūfī came to his defence, as did al-Hujwirī, when he was accused of being a heretic.
64. See Bhagi, p. 216; Massignon, L., IHKT, p. v.
65. For more information about Ḥallāj, see *ibid.*, p. 12; AMMI "Ḥallā*dj*", *SEI*, pp. 127-28; IMN, 70; M. Smith, AP, II, (1931), 214-20.

It is very important that we should examine Ḥallāj's ideas at some length, for they are not only the result of Indian influence, they are also similar to those of Kabīr. This will help us in assessing the trend of interaction between Hindu and Muslim ideas which eventually led to Kabīr's non-denominational mysticism.

In his theory of creation, Ḥallāj holds that before creation God was in His unity holding ineffable discourse within Himself and contemplating the splendour of His own essence, and this radical simplicity of His admiration is Love "which in His essence is the essence of essences" without any attributes. In His perfect isolation (*infirād*) God was illuminated by Love, and from this illumination came the multiplicity of His attributes and names. Then in order to see His supreme joy, He projected out of the pre-eternal (*azal*) an image of Himself, this was Adam[66] (or *Puruṣa* or *Hiraṇyagarbha*).

This creation theory of Ḥallāj has corresponding reference both in the Upaniṣad (cf. *Aitareya*, 1.1.1., 1,1,3)[67] and in the Qur'ān (2.30; 4.1; 7.11; 59.24). Although there is a corresponding agreement in all of them as far as the process of creation and the concept of the First Person are concerned, Ḥallāj has given us a new element responsible for setting in motion the whole process of creation, that is the Love of God. This "Love of God" is the fundamental theory of all mysticism; the mystics try to explain everything in terms of this theory. In fact, they live by, and for, this Love of God and nothing else. Kabīr was not an exception to this mystic theory.

According to Ḥallāj's theory of creation, the absolute God in His divinity (*lāhūt*) became in Adam God in humanity (*nāsūt*). Thus, considering Adam as the manifestation of God, Ḥallāj seems to have conceived of this relation of God with man as the infusion of the divine into the human—a reference to the emanatory theory of creation as found in the Qur'ān (15.29) as well as in *Bṛhd. Up.* 1.4.7 and in many other passages of Hindu religious literature;[68] in Sāṅkhya terms,

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66. Cf. *Kitāb al-Tawāsīn*, p. 129; also see Tara Chand, p. 70.

67. See PUR, 515; G.K. 1. 6-9; *Ṛg-Veda*, 10.121; PU, 1.4; also cf. Br. U, 1.4.1; 1.4.3.

68. See *Atharva Veda*, 10. 7.7, 8; 11.4.13; SB, 6.1.6; DPPU, 183.

the illumination of *buddhi* by *puruṣa*.[69] Finally, it is a clear allusion to the birth of Jesus as a spirit of God infused into the womb of Mary as it is described in the Qur'ān (3.45, 47). In fact, Ḥallāj considers Jesus as the perfect type of deified man (*insān-ul-kāmil*) who is the representative of God on earth.[70]

The union of *lāhūt* and *nāsūt* is called *ḥulūl* (incarnation). In other words, God incarnates Himself on earth through the perfect man. The incarnation is explained as the commixture (*imtizāj*) of the divine and human natures.[71] The doctrine of commixture is clearly found in some poems of Ḥallāj. Thus he says :

I am He whom I love, and whom I love is I.
We are two spirits dwelling in one body.
If thou seest me, thou seest Him, and if
thou seest Him, thou seest us both.[72]

In his highest ecstasy, Ḥallāj declared : "*Anā'l-Ḥaqq*" (I am the Ḥaqq or Truth, i.e. God. Massignon renders it "I am the Creative Truth"[73]). Apart from meaning Creator, *al-Ḥaqq* is also applied to God when conceived pantheistically as the one permanent reality,[74] thereby declaring that the "saint in his deification becomes the living and personal witness of God," says Nicholson.[75]

Manṣūr Ḥallāj is considered the most radical of all Ṣūfīs. He was so intoxicatingly absorbed in divine love that he recklessly uttered expressions that cost him his life. Nonetheless, he left behind him a valuable tradition which the later Ṣūfīs incorporated into the body of Ṣūfīsm.

Ḥallāj appears to be the first Ṣūfī to introduce the doctrines of incarnation, transmigration of spirits (*naskh-i-arwāḥ*) and commixture, which were so opposed to orthodox Islām, into Ṣūfism. This only indicates the strong Indian influence on him. He has expressed some vague Vedāntic ideas. The

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69. See Dasgupta, S. N., *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Cambridge, 1969, I, 260.
70. Cf. Chaudhury, p. 58; Tara Chand, pp. 70-71.
71. Cf. L. Massignon, "Ḥulūl", *SEI*, p. 141.
72. Quoted in Chaudhury, p. 58.
73. See *Kitāb al-Tawāsīn*, p. 174.
74. Cf. D. B. Macdonald, "Ḥaḳḳ", *SEI*, pp. 126-27.
75. IMN, 79; also see *Ṣūfism*, pp. 59-60; *Personality in Ṣūfism*, p. 32; *Legacy of Islām*, p. 217.

ideas of Ḥallāj are found in Kabīr's teaching, but the latter categorically rejected the theory of incarnation. Ḥallāj does not seem to have rejected anything of Islām, and is reported to have performed pilgrimage to Mecca;[76] whereas Kabīr discarded the usefulness of all the fundamentals of Islām with the exception of monotheism and egalitarianism.

Before Kabīr, the first Ṣūfī who overtly spoke against religious obligations was Abū Sa'īd ibn Abi'l-Khayr (d. 375/967-440/1049) of Khurāsān. He neglected the ritual prayer and refused to perform the *Ḥajj* (pilgrimage) to Mecca which other Ṣūfīs did.[77] As regards pilgrimage, he is reported to have said : "It is no great matter that thou shouldst tread under thy feet a thousand miles of ground in order to visit a stone-house. The true man of God sits where he is, and the *Bayt al-Ma'mūr* (the *Ka'ba*) comes several times in a day and night to visit him and perform the circumambulation (*ṭawāf*) above his head. Look and see !"[78] The mystic's pilgrimage takes place within himself. "If God sets the way to Mecca before any one," a Ṣūfī is quoted to have said, "that person has been cast out of the way to the Truth."[79] Much more bold was his saying :

Not until every mosque beneath the sun,
Is ruined will our holy work be done,
And never will true Muslim appear,
Till faith and infidelity are one.[80]

The rejection of formal religion on the part of Abū Sa'īd shows that he did not attach any intrinsic value to the external forms of religion. To him, the essence of religion was not the formal act but the "passing away from self" which is attained in ecstasy. Formal religion is for those who are only beginners in the way to the Truth, and not for those saints who have reached the final stage of their long journey towards the Truth

76. See "al-Ḥallādj", *SEI*, p. 127.
77. Cf. IMN, 61 ; also see M. Smith, "Abū Sa'īd b. Abī Al-Khayr : The Ornament of the Mystic Pāth", AP, II (1931), 540-46. For the doctrines of Abū Sa 'īd, see *Asrār al-Tawḥīd fī Maqāmāt al-Shaykh Abī Sa 'īd* (The Secrets of the Unity According to the Teaching of Shaykh Abū Sa'īd) comp. Muḥammad al-Munawwar, ed. V. A. Zhukovskhy (Persian text), St. Petersburg, 1899.
78. IMN, 61-62.
79. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 62.
80. Quoted by De Bary, p. 414.

and now live in permanent communion with God. Thus Dr. Radhakrishnan says, "Those who have seen the radiant vision of the Divine protest against the exaggerated importance attached to outward forms."[81] At this stage they are above law rather than against it.

We have examined the principal ideas of the Ṣūfīs in order to show the Indian influence on them, on the one hand, and to draw attention to the similarities and dissimilarities of their ideas with those of Kabīr, on the other. They are all Ṣūfīs even though some are treated as heterodox or *bi-shara'* Ṣūfīs by orthodox Islām. Since this was the situation with the heterodox Ṣūfīs, Kabīr's rejection of formal Islām should not be construed as an act of a Hindu against Islām. However, though a heterodox Ṣūfī, he differed from heterodox Ṣūfīs that we have discussed in the foregoing pages. This difference seems due mainly to the different mission which Kabīr took upon himself to perform, namely, the unification of two opposing religions Hinduism and Islām. As a matter of fact, Kabīr's mysticism was the climax of that mystical attitude which was born in Indo-Islamic mysticism as a result of the interaction that took place between Islām and Indian ideas. And that mystical attitude advocated a commonly shareable system in disregard of both orthodox Islām and orthodox Hinduism.

Now let us turn to the subject of Ṣūfīsm in India, where it made a valuable contribution by creating an atmosphere for friendship and interaction between Hinduism and Islām. In this section we do not propose to discuss Indian Ṣūfīsm as a whole, that is, its many-sided activity or its organisational history; rather we will confine our discussions to those individual Ṣūfīs who were instrumental in facilitating the process of interaction between Hinduism and Islām. In this respect we would empahsise that conversion was the most important means of opening the door to interaction as will be seen below. Our survey will be limited to the time of Kabīr (d. 1518).

Throughout the history of Islām in India the Ṣūfīs have been a relatively important factor. Although some Muslim rulers exercised political authority to force conversions, as we have noted, the fact remains that Islām as a religion scored its greatest

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81. HVL, 35.

success through the Ṣūfīs and not through the help of the political rulers.[82] It may also be remembered that many forced converts subsequently disowned their new religion, such as Harihara and Bukka.[83] It was only the Ṣūfī propagation of Islām that produced the "most lasting missionary triumphs."[84] But some writers ignore this fact, and instead stress the military and political aspects of Muslim life in Indian sub-continent.[85] Sir T. W. Arnold was the first scholar who emphasised the contributions that the Ṣūfīs made to the peaceful propagation of Islām in India and the creation of an atmosphere for interaction between Hinduism and Islām.

Ṣūfīs came to India, as elsewhere, not as an organised party, or as the wards of the Muslim conquerors. Usually they have been individuals endowed with piety and religious zeal, some of them men of learning, who, through their personal interest in the spread of their religion, and often inspired by a divine call, were willing to wander from place to place and gather disciples.

The period of this individualistic missionary activity commences from the beginning of the eleventh century. One of the earliest Ṣūfīs was Shaykh Ismā'īl who came to Lahore from Bukhārā about 1005 A.D. It is said that crowds "flocked to listen to his sermons, and that no unbeliever ever came into personal contact with him without being converted to the faith of Islām.[86]

Multān was another place where vigorous Ṣūfī activities have been reported during the early years of the Muslim occupation of India. On the authority of geographer-historian Balādhūrī, Arnold tells us that during the three centuries of Arab rule in Sindh there were many Hindus converted to Islām; and several Sindhī princes accepted Islām.[87] Alongside the Ṣūfīs, there were still some Arab merchants who were pursuing missionary work. "To the influence of such trading communities", Arnold

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82. See Arnold, T. W., PI, 261-65; SIC, 83.
83. See Arnold, pp. 259, 260, 265; also see Majumdar, R.C. (ed). HCIP, VI, 271-72; SIC, 86.
84. Arnold, p. 266.
85. Cf. *ibid.*
86. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 275.

suggests, "was most probably due to conversion of the Sammans, who ruled over Sindh from 1351-1521."[88]

Sayyīd Yūsuf-ud-Dīn was the famous Ṣūfī who conducted proselytising missions in Sindh. He came to Sindh in 1422 and worked there for ten years. He is reported to have converted as many as 700 families of the Lohana caste.[89]

The Ṣūfī who made the most valuable contribution towards the interaction between Hindus and the Muslims was an Ismā'īli missionary, named Pīr Ṣadr-ud-Dīn. He was head of the Khojah sect of Sindh about the year 1430. In keeping with the principles of accommodation that this sect was wont to practise, he took a Hindu name (which is not available) and made certain compromises with the Hindus whom he sought to convert to Islām. He wrote a book entitled *Daśavatār* (Tenth Incarnation) in which Khalīfa 'Alī is made out to be the tenth Avatār of Viṣṇu. This book was accepted as the scripture of the Khojah sect; it assumes the nine incarnations of Viṣṇu to be true. Further, he is also reported to have identified Brahmā with Muḥammad, Viṣṇu with 'Alī and Adam with Śiva.[90] He won most of his converts from the rural areas of Upper Sindh: then he preached in Cutch whence his doctrines spread southwards through Gujarat to Bombay. And at present the Khojah communities are found in almost all trading towns of south and south-western India, especially in Bombay.[91]

There were two other Ismā'īli missionaries who worked in the southern parts of India. The first was 'Abdullāh, who came to India in 1067. He is said to have been a man of great learning and is credited with having performed many miracles. He converted to Islām a large number of Hindus.[92]

'Abdullāh is also believed to have been the founder of the Bohra sect of India[93] —a Shī'ah community, mainly of Hindu origin, who are largely found in the chief commercial centres of the Bombay Presidency.

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88. Cf. *ibid.*; pp. 276-77.
89. See *ibid.*; also cf. M. R. Haig, *JRAS*, XIX (1887), 393-412.
90. Arnold, pp. 277-78.
91. See Nanjiani, S., *Khoja Vṛtānt*, Aḥmadābād, 1829, p. 208; B. Frere, MM, XXXIV (1876), 431-33.
92. Arnold, p. 278.
93. Some think that Mullāh 'Alī was the first Bohra missionary whose proselytising story has been greatly extolled by the Shī'ah historians (cf. Arnold, pp. 279-80).

'Abdullāh was a contemporary of Rāmānuja. As a very successful preacher, his proselytising activity was quite widespread, and he converted great numbers of Hindus to Islām. From the general atmosphere that his preaching produced in south India, Yūsuf Ḥusain has suggested the possible influence of his teaching on Rāmānuja.[94]

The other Ismā'īli missionary was Nūr-ud-Dīn, generally known by his Hindu name, Nūr Satagar, who came to Gujarat in the reign of King Siddha Rāj (1094-1143).[95] He is said to have converted the Kanbir, Khorwas and Koris, all from the low castes of Gujarat.

There were many other Ṣūfīs who preached in south India and the Deccan, but it is not necessary to describe their individual histories. The fact that we want to emphasise is that through the peaceful propagation and conversion of the Ṣūfīs many individual Hindus as well as many tribes and sects were won over to Islām. This led to the process of interaction between the two religions in South India.[96]

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94. GMIC, 13, 47; also see Titus, M. T., II, 43.

95. K. B. Fazlullāh Luṭfullāh suggests that Nūr Satagar came to India rather later, in the reign of Bhīma II (1179-1242) (see Arnold, p. 278).

96. For example, a community of Muslims in southern India, namely, the Ṛavuttans (they are found chiefly in the Tamil-speaking districts of Madura, Tinnevelly, Coimbatore, North Arcot and the Nilgiris), ascribe their conversion to the preaching of missionaries whose tombs are held in veneration by them to the present day. The most famous of these was Sayyīd Nathār Shāh (969-1039)(IGI, XXIV, 47, spells his name Nādir Shāh; but Qādir Ḥusayn calls him Nathad Valī), who after many wanderings in Arabia, Persia and northern India, settled down in Trichinopoly, where he spent the remaining years of his life in prayer and works of charity, and converted a large number of Hindus to the faith of Islām. His tomb is much resorted to as a place of pilgrimage, and the Muslims renamed Trichinopoly Nathār Nagar, after the name of their saint (see MDG : *Trichinopoly*, Madras, 1907, I, 338; Qādir Ḥusayn Khān, *South Indian Musalmāns*, Madras, 1910, p. 36 referred to by Arnold, p. 270).

Sayyīd Ibrāhim Shahīd (born about the middle of the twelfth cent.), whose tomb is at Ervadi, was a militant hero who led an expedition into the Pāṇḍya kingdom occupied the country for about twelve years, but was at last slain. His son's life was, however, spared in consideration of the beneficent rule of his father, and a grant of land was made to him, which his descendants enjoy to the present day (cf. Arnold, p. 270). Another group of Muslims in southern India, namely, the Dūdekulas, who live by cotton cleaning and by weaving cloth, attribute their conversion to Bābā Fakhr-ud-Dīn, whose tomb they revere at Penukonda (see Arnold, p. 271). Legend says that he was originally a king of Sistān, who abdicated his throne in favour of his brother and became a religious mendicant. After making the pilgrimage to Mecca and Madina, he was bidden by the

In north and north-western India (including Pākistān) the names of the outstanding Ṣūfī preachers were 'Alī Hujwirī (11th cent.), Shaykh Bahā-ud-Dīn Zakāriya Multānī (d. 1266), Bābā Farīd-ud-Dīn Shakarganj of Pakpattan (d. 1265), Khawājah Mu'īn-ud-Dīn Chishtī of Ajmir (d. 1236), Niẓām-ud-Dīn Awliyā of Delhi (d. 1325), Nāṣir-ud-Dīn Chirāg-i-Delhi (d. 1356), Khawājah Quṭb-ud-Dīn Bakhtiyār Kākī of Delhi (d. 1236), Shaykh Jalāl-ud-Dīn Tabrizī (d. 1244), Shaykh Jalāl-ud-Dīn Surkhposh (d.1291), Sharf-ud-Dīn Yaḥyā

Prophet in a dream to go to India; here he met Nathār Shāh of Trichinopoly and became his disciple and was sent by him in company with 200 religious mendicants on a proselytising mission. The legend goes on to say that they finally settled at Penukonda in the vicinity of a Hindu temple, where their presence was unwelcome to the Rājāh of the place, but after some tests of their religious character, especially Bābā Fakhr-ud-Dīn's miracles against a Brāhman, the Rājāh became a Muslim, and his example was followed by a large number of inhabitants of the neighbourhood. The temple of the place was turned into a mosque (see Qādir Ḥusayn Khān, pp. 39-42; MDG *Anantapūr*, I, 193-94 referred to by Arnold, p. 271; also cf. W.F. Sinclair, "Notes on Castes in the Dekhan", IA, III (1874), 184 90).

From Malabar Islām was taken by the missionaries to the Laccadive and Maldive Islands. The date of the conversion of the first Muslim Sulṭān of the Maldive Island, Aḥmad Shanurāja has been conjectured to have been about 1200. According to Ibn Baṭṭūṭah all the inhabitants of the Islands were converted Muslims. The story of the spread of Islām in the Islands is told thus: There was a demon, who used to visit the Islands and take the life of a young girl. The people of the Islands were perturbed. But a Moroccan Muslim, most probably a Ṣūfī, named Abūl Barākāt the Berber came there and settled in the Island of Mahal. One night he dressed himself like a girl and waited for the demon to come and to take "her". But Abūl Barākāt was reciting the Qur'ān all the time. When the demon came to take the girl as usual, he was terribly frightened and fled away never to come again. Thus Abūl Barākāt freed the people of the Islands from the threat of the demon. The King of the Islands, Shanurāja asked him to stay there. Eventually the King accepted Islām and the rest followed him. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah resided in the Maldive Island during the years 1343-44 and married the daughter of the *Wazīr* (minister), who was the grandson of the Sulṭān Dāwūd, who was a grandson of the Sulṭān Aḥmad Shanurāja. From the story of the spread of Islām in those Islands, Arnold suggests that it is quite possible that the Muslim merchants had introduced Islām into the Island three centuries before Ibn Baṭṭūṭah's visit, and the process of conversion must undoubtedly have been a gradual one (see Bell, H. C. P., *The Maldive Islands*, Colombo, 1883, pp. 23-25, 57-58, 71 referred to by Arnold, n. 2, p. 273; '*The Reḥla of Ibn Baṭṭuṭah* (*India, Maldive Islands and Ceylon*), tr. & com. Mahdī Ḥusain, Baroda, 1953, pp. 197-213).

The introduction of Islām into the Laccadive Islands is attributed to an Arab preacher, popularly known Mumba Mulyaka. His tomb is still extant at Androth. He probably reached these Islands some time in the twelfth century (cf. Arnold, p. 273).

Manerī (d. 1380), Shaykh Zain-ud-Dīn Dāwūd (d. 1370). Sayyīd Jalāl (popularly known Makhdūm-i-Jahāniyān): 'served by all mankind', d. early 14th cent., and many more. The life and activity of each of them would fill a volume. In short, it may be said that the preaching of these holy men represented a great spiritual force which did not differentiate men by caste or religion. As a result their disciples came from every walk of life.

The keys which these mystics used to open the door of interaction were the unity of God and love for Him; the equality of man and social justice; simplicity of religious practice. Niẓām-ud-Dīn, for instance, put particular stress on the motive of love which leads to the realisation of God. The Shaykh is reported to have said, "O Muslims ! I swear by God, that He holds dear those who love Him for the sake of human beings, and also those who love human beings for the sake of God. This is the only way to love and adore God."[97] Amīr Khasraū, the most important disciple of the Shaykh tells us that he (Shaykh) said that "the entire knowledge of the learned is not equivalent to two virtues : (1) Reforms of the people and (2) Detached service of men."[98]

This is the type of message which the Ṣūfīs delivered to the Indians, and the magic power of this message was such that the

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The Deccan also was the scene of the labours of many missionaries. We are told that by the tenth century the Arabs were settled in large numbers in the towns of the Konkan. Under the Muslim dynasties of the Bahmanid (1347-1490) and Bijāpūr (1489-1686) Kings, a fresh impulse was given to Arab immigration, and with the trader and the soldier of fortune came the missionaries (Ṣūfīs) seeking to make spiritual conquests in the cause of Islām, and win over the unbelieving people of the country (cf. A. K. Nairne, IA, II (1873), 278-83, 317-22; III (1874), 181-82.

One of these Arab preachers, Pīr Mahābīr Khamdayat, came as a missionary to the Deccan as early as 1304, and among the farmers of Bijāpūr are to be found descendants of the Jains who were converted by him. About the close of the same century, a celebrated Ṣūfī of Gulbarga, Sayyīd Makhdūm Gisūdarāz, converted a number of the Hindus of the Poona district, and twenty years later his labours were crowned with a like success in Belgaum (cf. *Bombay Gazetteer*, X, 132; XVI, 75; XXI, 218, 223; XXIII, 282, 501 referred to in Arnold, p. 274). For the spread of Islām in Madura see G. J. Rodgers, *JASB*, LXIV (1895), 49-54; Shams-ud-Dīn Aḥmad, *JASB*, N. S., XXX (1934), 63-69; Mahdī Ḥusain, pp. 225-33.

97. Quoted in MIC. 43.

98. *Ibid.*

Ṣūfīs actually won the hearts of the Indians in a way that the Muslim rulers were unable to.

The Ṣūfīs spread a network of propagation throughout India. Their spiritual policy was *ṣulḥ-i-kul* (peace with all), and conversion was considered to be the most virtuous work; to this end, the Ṣūfīs made many concessions to the Hindus whose conversion to Islām they sought. As in south India, in north India also the Ṣūfī preaching led to the process of inter-action between the two communities, as a result, apart from innumerable individuals, a number of sects arose which were in fact a blending of the two faiths. Thus an Indian writer says:

"The period between 1200-1500 was remarkable for the permeation of Ṣūfīs throughout India. New sects and movements arose midway between Hinduism and Islām. Orthodox Hinduism evolved new doctrines which gained importance and vitality. There were mass conversions to Islām under the spell of Ṣūfīs. To make Islām emotionally satisfying they made several concessions to the practices of other creeds."[99] Professor Muḥammad Mujeeb has given a brilliant account of these mixed sects—their religious and social life.[100] We do not intend to repeat all these details, but it may be emphasised that some of these sects, such as the Muslim Rājpūts of Panipat, the Ḥusaynī Brāhmins of Rājpūtāna were not really converts to Islām, but had adopted such Islamic beliefs and practices as were not deemed contrary to Hinduism.[101] In this connection, mention may also be made of the Mahānubhāva, a non-idolatrous Kṛṣṇa sect, founded by Cakradharaswāmī (d.1272) of Awrangābād, on whom Ṣūfī influence has been suggested.[102]

The Ṣūfīs, like all other mystics, saw themselves to be the lovers of God; they are the seekers after God. Religious formalism was inconsistent with their spiritual quest. To them all religions are true in essence.[103] Shabistārī, for example, a Persian Ṣūfī, is reported to have said that Ṣūfīs are ever ready to accept what is good in other religions, like idol-worship, fire-worship, etc. These are good, according to him, for one who

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99. Bhagi, p. 222; also see K.M. Ashraf, *JASB*, L (1935), 103-359.
100. *The Indian Muslims*, Montreal, 1967, pp. 10-18.
101. See *ibid.*, p. 16; also cf. R. C. Bramley, *JASB*, N. S., II (1906), 209-222.
102. See Munshī, K. M., Foreword to HCIP, V, xviii.
103. See A. Wālī, *JASB*, N. S., XIX (1923), 237-52.

fails to realise the essential unity of God. "Idol-worship", he says, "is essentially unification."[104] That is to say, when a man worships an idol, that idol is taken by him as a manifestation of God, and God's manifestation cannot be evil.

Another famous Ṣūfī, Ibn al-'Arābī (1165-1240) declares that no religion is more sublime than a religion of love and longing for God. Love is the essence of all creeds: the true mystic welcomes it whatever guise it may assume. The following poem, attributed to this Ṣūfī, clearly illustrates the catholicity of Ṣūfī attitude to all religions :

My heart has become capable of every form :
it is a pasture for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks.
And a temple for idols, and the pilgrim's Ka'ba,
and the tables of the Tora and the book of Korān.
I follow the religion of Love, whichever way his camels take.
My religion and my faith is the true religion.
We have a pattern in Bishr, the lover of Hind and her sister,
and in Qays and Lubna, and Mayya and Ghaylān.[105]

In India, Amīr Khusraū who is by far the most powerful exponent of this attitude of the medieval Ṣūfīs, refers to Hindu customs and ceremonies in a spirit which must have been instrumental in discovering the principles of essential unity between Hinduism and Islām. Thus he declares :

Though Hindu is not faithful like me
He often believes in the same thing as I do.[106]

This was the catholicism of the Ṣūfīs. Naturally, they did not find it improper to establish a cordial relationship with the Hindus by making some ideological concessions to them and adopting some of their customs and practices. Such divine personages were respected by people and remained sources of blessing during their life-time; when they died, their tombs became objects of worship and places of pilgrimage for both Hindus and Muslims. Thus, following the principles of accommodation and brotherliness, some Ṣūfīs in India adopted the Hindu ideas of *ahiṁsā* (non-injury); they extended its application to animals also. Shaykh Ḥamīd-ud-Dīn Nagorī, for

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104. Quoted by Chaudhury, p. 129.
105. Cited in MIN, 105.
106. Niẓāmī, K. A., ARPI, 263.

example, did not like the idea that any living being should be deprived of its life. And it was his firm belief in *ahiṁsā* that made him a strict vegetarian. He also exhorted his disciples to develop vegetarian tastes.[107]

The attitude of sympathy and understanding which the Ṣūfīs adopted toward the Hindus can be measured from one of their sayings :

You [Muslims] who sneer at the idolatry of the Hindu,
Learn also from him how worship is done.[108]

This broad and cosmopolitan outlook helped in destroying those tendencies of prejudice and of mistrust and isolation which characterised relations between the Hindus and the Muslims before the coming of the Ṣūfīs, and paved the way for rapprochement and interaction at all levels of their life, ideological and social in particular.

It has been indicated that the work of conversion was so widespread that in many cases the conversion itself was imperfect. It would appear that the Ṣūfīs were guided in their missionary work by a famous *ḥadīth* attributed to Prophet Muḥammad : "Whoever has said there is no God but Allāh, he has entered the paradise." But the simple conversion allowed the neo-Muslims to retain their traditional caste distinctions. Thus was introduced into the Islamic body politic an important feature of Hinduism.[109] Kabīr belonged to one of the professional lower castes that of the weavers.

Besides this carry-over from Hinduism to Islām, we are also told that under the influence of Hinduism (and also following the pre-Muslim Iranian tradition) Indian Muslims considered society to consist of four main classes—"men of the pen, men of the sword, men of business and men of the soil." The first are guardians of religion and learning, the second are the guardians of those guardians, and the third and the fourth are the sustainers of the first two classes. Attempts at encroachment of any class by any other, it is believed, can only result in chaos and disorder.[110]

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107. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 239-40.
108. Cited in ARPI, 263
109. See Arnold, p. 289; Ikrām, S. M., MCI, 131. Shaykh, Sayyīd, Mughal and Pathān, are the four aristocratic classes of Indian Muslims. Also see Humāyūn Kabīr, "Islām in India", in CHIB, 581.
110. See De Bary, p. 510.

The first book that deals with this matter of social classification was written by Muḥammad ibn Asad Jalāl-ud-Dīn Al-Dawwānī (1427-1501). Although the book was written in Persia, it was quite popular in medieval India. Abū'l Faḍl, the famous writer of *Ā'in-i-Akbar*ī, is also reported to have made such divisions of the people.[111]

It is to be noted here, especially, that in repugnance to Islamic ideals of egalitarianism, the Indian Muslim, under Hindu influence, accepted social stratification. It corresponds exactly to the four-caste division of Hindu society against which the Ṣūfīs and some *bhaktas*, especially Kabīr, waged a fierce crusade and won their greatest victory.

Some writers have also considered the feudal ideal in medieval Muslim India, which corresponds to the Kṣatriya caste of Hinduism, to be a result of Hindu influence on Islamic society.[112] This view, however, cannot be maintained, for feudalism was not a characteristic feature of medieval Muslim India as it was prevalent in the Ottoman Empire and in Europe.

Intermarriage was one of the sources of assimilation and interaction. By and large, the Ṣūfīs were not celibates. Most Ṣūfīs in India married Hindu girls, probably with simple acceptance of Islām by them which is in keeping with the injunction of the Qur'ān (2.221). But the converted wife brought with her many Hindu customs and practices to her Ṣūfī husband's house. These practices pertain mostly to family life, such as marriage, birth and death ceremonies. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah gives a long description of Indian Muslim marriage in which Hindu practices played a major role.[113]

There are no cases of divorce or the remarriage of widows recorded in Indian Ṣūfī hagiology. This attitude on the part of the Indian Ṣūfīs would seem to be the result of Hindu influence on them. Hence we can assert that intermarriage was a very important source of interaction and assimilation. Kabīr's daughter, Kamālī, is reported to have been married to a

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111. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 511-12, 513.

112. See Humāyūn Kabīr, pp. 581-82.

113. Cf. Mahdī Ḥusain, pp. 78 ff.; also see Mujeeb, p. 224; C.C. Mackenzie, *JRAS*, 1833, pp. 170 ff.

Brāhmin boy, although there must have been many Muslim boys in the society.

Interaction between the two faiths took place in another important matter. Although reverence and service to a teacher on the part of a student or a novice is an ancient Indian idea,[114] the absorption in God through devotion to a spiritual preceptor (Hindu : *guru*; Muslim: *Pīr*, *Shaykh*, *Murshid*, *Quṭb*) on the part of a novice (Hindu : *chela* ; Muslim : *murīd*)[115] seems to have been a particularly accepted practice among the Shī'ahs.[116]. It corresponds to the *guru-bhakti* of the Hindus.[117] But some writers think that the Ṣūfīs took it from Hinduism.[118] In any case, it was an important point of interaction between the two systems. Now, although *guru-bhakti* is a dominant feature of Kabīr's teaching, yet unlike other *bhaktas*, he took special care not to elevate the *guru* to any divine status, and this is a clear indication of his strong sense of monotheism.

We have noticed before that *Dhikr* (devotional recitation or remembrance of God's names and attributes) is a typical Ṣūfī practice which originated in Islām (see Q. 76.25; 33. 41, *et passim*). In another place the Qur'ān says: "But he who turneth away from remembrance of Me, his will be a narrow life, and I shall bring him blind to the assembly of the Day of Resurrection" (20. 124). The process of *dhikr*, however, has similarity with the meditation and breathing exercises of Yoga. Probably for this reason yogis were attracted to some of the Ṣūfīs, like Sayyīd Ḥusayn Khangswar, Farīd-ud-Dīn Ganj-i-Shakar, Niẓām-ud-Dīn Awliyā and others.[119] However, it

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114. Cf. Āśvalāyana, *Gṛhya Sūtras*, 3.4.4; 22.2 in SBE XXIX, 641; *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, 6.14.2.; George Bühler, (The Laws of Manu), New York, 1969, pp. 57, 73.

115. For "*Shaykh*", "*Murshid*", and "*Murīd*", see L. Massignon, "Ṭarīḳa", *SEI*, p. 573; and for "*Pīr*", and "*Quṭb*", see W. M. Patton, "Pīr", *ERE*, X (1918), 40-43; also see....., "Saints and Martyrs (Muḥammadan)", *ERE*, XI (1920), 63-68; for "Guru" see G. A. Grierson, "Bhakti-Marga", *ERE*, II (1910), 539-551; also see Tara Chand pp. 81-82.

116. See R. Strothmann, ',Shī'a", *SEI*, pp. 534-41; W. M. Patton, "Shī'ahs", *ERE*, XI (1920), 453-58; C.I. Huart, " 'Alī B. Abī Ṭālib", *SEI*, pp. 31-32; Tara Chand, pp. 114-15.

117. *Ibid.*, p. 115; also see Rāajgopalāchārya, T., VRI, 12; Barth, A., RI, 228-30.

118. Ikrām, p. 131;....., *Āb-i-Kawthar*, Lahore, 1952, p. 236; Sijzī, Amīr Ḥasan, *Fawā'id-ul-Fuwād*, Delhi, 1865, p. 49; MMI, 35.

119. See SIC, 135; Sen, p. 36; Mujeeb, pp. 165-66.

was not a onesided attraction; it was a matter of interaction. The Shattārī order of Ṣūfīs, considered to be orthodox, seems to have borrowed yogic elements directly. The Shattārī Ṣūfīs used to live in forests like the yogis on a frugal diet of fruits and herbs, and subjected themselves to hard physical and spiritual exercises.[120] Of all the Hindu and Muslim mystics of India, Kabīr probably represents the solitary instance of one who clearly rejected the usefulness of yoga for spiritual pursuits. We are also told that the Ṣūfīs did not stop at the door of yoga; they proceeded farther and some of them accepted Tantric teachings.[121]

In the fourteenth century another feature of Hindu-Buddhist mysticism, namely, wandering in the forest, accentuated the wandering habit of some Indian Ṣūfīs. Thus Sharf-ud-Dīn Abū 'Alī (d. 1323) came to be designated a "qalandar" possibly because of his wanderings.[122] Nāṣir-ud-Dīn Chirāgh-i-Delhi and his disciple, Gesūdarāz (long curl : d. 1422), also lived as wandering Ṣūfīs. The most interesting case in this respect is that of Sharf-ud-Dīn Yaḥyā Manerī who established the Firdawsiya order of Ṣūfīs in India. After his long wanderings, he chose a place for his religious exercises close to a spring in Magdha, sacred to the Hindus and the Buddhists, which came to be known as Makhdūm Kund.[123]

One of the characteristic features of Ṣūfīsm since its inception has been the doctrine of *tawakkul 'ala Allāh*[124] (absolute dependence on God's mercy). Belief in fate or predestination (*qadr*) is a part of the article of faith in Islām.[125] Likewise in the Qūr'ān we are told that every godly act of man is preceded by an act of God's favour towards man. "Then He turned to them, that they might turn" (9. 119). Apart from this, there

120. Cf. SIC, 137.
121. See Sen, pp. 36-37.
122. Referred to in SIC, 135.
123. *Āb-i-Kawthar*, p. 500.
124. See R. A. Nicholson, "Tawakkul", *EI*, IV, 703.
125. The complete article of faith in Islām runs as follows: "I believe in God, and in His Angels, and in His Books, and in His Prophets, and in the Last Day, and in the Fate: good and evil being from God and in the Resurrection after death. The Qādrīya was the first Muslim sect who talked about Free Will as against Predestination, while the Jabarites were the absolute believers in the doctrine of Predestination (see D. B. Macdonald "Ḳadar", and "Ḳadarīya", *SEI*, pp. 200-201.

are other verses in the Qur'ān to show God's love for man and His nearness to man (e.g. 5. 59, 119; 50. 15), which allowed the Ṣūfīs to develop the conception of God not as a remote, indifferent Potentate of the Universe, but as a merciful Allāh ever taking the first step towards man to draw him unto Him by the powerful cords of love.[126]

These Ṣūfī ideas of love for God, and absolute surrender to God's mercy, which corresponds to Sanskrit *Prapatti*, came to be the foundation on which the Southern School of post-Rāmānuja Vaiṣṇava *Bhakti* stood. Kabīr appears to have had strong affinity with that position. It may be urged that these two ideas are also found in the *Gītā*. Kṛṣṇa, for example, after giving a long lesson, tells Arjuna :

Be me-minded, devoted to Me;
Worshipping Me, revere Me;
And to Me alone shalt thou go;
truly to thee I promise it—
(because) thou art dear to Me.
Abandoning all (other) duties,
Go to Me as thy sole refuge;
From all evils I thee
Shall rescue: be not grieved ! (18. 65-66).[127]

But the *Gītā* did not have the boldness to make the doctrines of love and self-surrender universal, nor did it uphold these doctrines in disregard of all other traditional rituals and ceremonies of Hinduism.[128] The task seems to have been left to the Ṣūfīs who gave a new turn to the Indian mind in its spiritual quest. In fact, the Ṣūfī influence stimulated those Indian ideas. As a result a new religious movement in the shape of *bhakti* cult took place in medieval India.

In Islām, from the theological point of view, there is no place for singing and dancing, at least for spiritual purposes. Some maintain that since singing has no place in Islām, the rhythmical recitation of the Qur'ān compensates for it. Any way, there has been much dispute among theologians as to the permissi-

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126. See *Ṣūfīsm*, p. 21.
127. Edgerton, F. (tr.), *The Bhagavad Gītā*, New York, 1964, p. 90; also see Radhakrishnan, S.(tr.), *The Bhagavadgītā*, London, 1970 p. 377; Dasgupta, S. N., HM, 144.
128. See *ibid.*, p. 124.

bility of music and dancing for religious exercises to produce mystic trance. Ghazzālī speaks of them as novelties (*bida'at*) which had not been practised either by the Prophet or his immediate companions. But Ghazzālī himself approves of them for by their means the Ṣūfīs "stir up in themselves greater love towards God."[129] Besides some individual Ṣūfīs of India, at least two orthodox Indian Ṣūfī orders,[130] namely, Chishtīya and Suhrawardīya, practised them with all enthusiasm and vigour and called it *Qawwālī*. Thus it is generally maintained that *samā'* (singing and dancing) has been incorporated in Indian Ṣūfīsm under Hindu influence. "Ṣūfīsm indeed was a religion of intense devotion," says Tara Chand, "love was its passion; poetry, song and dance its worship; and passing away in God its ideal."[131]

However, no account of the interaction of Hindu-Muslim ideas will appear complete without noticing how the heterodox side of the two religious systems began to meet in worship. Popular legendary heroes of the Muslims, like Ghāzī Miyān,[132] Pīr Badr,[133] and also Khawājah Khīzir, whose Muslim title has been Hinduised into Rājāh Kidr, began to be worshipped as Hindu-Muslim common gods. "This is a good instance of a fact,..." remarks a writer, "that the Hindus are always ready to annex the deities and beliefs of other races."[134]

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129. Cf. D.B. Macdonald, "Emotional Religion in Islām as affected by Music and Singing" *JRAS*, N.S., XXXIII (Pt. I: 1901), 195-252; Pt. II : 705-48; XXXIV (Pt. III : 1902), 1-28.

130. Cf. *supra*, pp. 35-38. Of the seventeen Ṣūfī orders prevalent in India in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, mentioned by Abū'l Faḍl (*Ā'īn-i-Akbarī*, Delhi, 1965,III, 389-400), eight—the Ḥabībī, the Junaydī, the Tūsī, the Chishtī, the Suhrawardī, the Qādirī, the Naqshbandī and the Firdawsī—were orthodox and closely integrated with the *sharī'ah*.

131. *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

132. Cf. K. A. Nizāmī, "Ghāzī Miyān", *EI*, 1047-48; also see D.S. Margoliouth, "Pan*dj* Pīr", *SEI*, p. 457.,

133. See J. Beames, "The Saint Pīr Badr", *JRAS*, N. S., XXVI (1894), 838-40; and the letter of H. Beveridges on "Pīr Badar" *ibid.*, p. 840.

134. Cf. Crooke, W., PRFNI, I, 47; also see Sen, p.37. According to *Sikandar-nāmah* Khawājah Khizir was a Muslim saint who presided over the well of immortality, and directed Alexandar of Mecedon in his vain search for the blessed waters. The fish is his vehicle, and hence its image is painted over the doors of both Hindus and Muslims, while it became the family crest of the late royal house of Awādh. Among Muslims a prayer is offered to this Khawājah at the first shaving of a boy, and a little boat is launched in a river or a tank in his honour. The same rite is perfomed at the close of the rainy season, when it is supposed to have some connection with the saint Ilisha, that is to say the prophet Elisha.

It has been emphasised before that as missionaries of Islām and as liberal leaders of its spirituality, the Ṣūfīs were the first among the Muslims to come in contact with the Hindu masses, and thus also with Hindu mystics and saints. The meeting of Hindu and Muslim mysticism gave rise to some saints who were venerated by both communities alike. Some of these Hindu-Muslim saints had only Muslim names, but no connection with Islamic faith. One such saint was Gūgā Pīr, or Zāhir Pīr, who is said to have flourished toward the middle of the twelfth century. His devotees are found throughout northern and north-western India. Another such *pīr* was Satya Pīr or Satya Narāyan of Bengal. These deified *pīrs* enjoyed the veneration of the Hindus and the Muslims alike. There are numerous instances of this kind in Bengal, such as Baül and Zākir.[135] The most widely known of this kind of *pīr* was a group of *pīrs* called *Panj* or *Panch Pīr* (Five Saints).[136] They were popularly worshipped throughout North India. But the list of five differs from place to place. W. Crooke tells us that there are at least five lists current in Banares alone.[137] The *Panj Pīr* is regarded as the Muslim parallel to the Five Pandavas who are equally popular among Hindus.[138]

Undoubtedly, these aspects of religion are considered by the orthodox of Hindiusm and Islām as pure heresies and superstitions. However, no organised protest was raised in either religion until the beginning of the nineteenth century. And

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Another legend represents Khizir to be of the family of Noah, who is also regarded by rural Muslims as a water deity in connection with the flood. Others connect him with St. George, the patron saint of England, who is the Ghergis of Syria, and according to Muslim tradition was sent in the time of the Prophet Muḥammad to convert the king of Mausil and came to life after three successive martyrdoms. Some consider him as the companion of Moses, and the commentator Ḥusayn says he was a general in the army of Dhū'l Qarnayn (he of the two horns) or Alexander the Great. In fact, the legend is associated with the Qur'ānic verse 18.60-82 (cf. M.L. Dames, "Khidir", *SEI*, pp. 232-35; also see B. A. Gupte, *JASB*, LXXI (1903), 87.

135. Cf. Sen, p. 38; also see T. W. Arnold, "Saints and Martyrs (Muḥammadan in India)", *ERE*, XI (1920), 68-73.

136. See D. S. Margoliouth, "Pan*dj* Pīr", *SEI*, p. 457.

137. *Op.cit.*, p. 203; also see Titus, p. 139.

138. See Macnicol, N., LRIP, 141.

curiously enough both religions launched puritanical movements first in Bengal—Farā'idī of Ḥājī Sharī'at Ullāh (1781-1840)[139] and Brāhmo Samāj of Rām Mohan Roy (1772-1833);[140] almost simultaneously two other such movements were initiated in Upper India, namely, Mujāhidīn (or Wahhābī) by Sayyīd Aḥmad Shahīd (1786-1830)[141] and Ārya Samāj by Swāmī Dayānanda Saraswatī (1827-1883)[142].

Turning to other aspects of Hindu-Muslim life in medieval India, we find some evidence of interaction between the two cultures in the realm of language. The eagerness of the Ṣūfīs to establish close relation with the Hindus in order to understand their religious life and thought, and also to let them understand the teachings of the Ṣūfīs, facilitated the evolution of a common medium for the exchange of ideas. Thus was born the Hindī or Hindustānī language in North India, and Kabīr is regarded as the father of Hindī literature.[143]

As for South India, we are told that the Ṣūīfs learned Tamil and left valuable works in that language. Hence Bājī Nāth Purī writes, "In Southern India, as pointed out by many scholars, the Hindu philosophy and religion attempted to discover the common elements and analogies in the philosophical ideas, dogma and ritual of Islām." "The Hindu and Muslim saints of Southern India", continues Purī, "have left behind them poetical compositions in the Tamil language. As a result of the synthesis between the two streams of religious thought emerged what is known as the Hindustānī way in language and culture."[144]

The Ṣūfīs also took interest in literary works on Hindu mysticism. Thus Rukhn-ud-Dīn Samarqandī translated a book on Hindu mysticism entitled *Amratkund* first into Arabic, then into Persian with the help of a Brāhmin called Bhūjan from whom he learned Sanskrit and whom he claims to have converted to Islām during his visit to Lakhnauti in the early part of

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139. Cf. M. Hidāyet Ḥosain, "Farā'idīya", *SEI*, pp. 99-100.
140. See Farquhar. J. N., MRMI, 29-100.
141. Cf. Hedāyetullāh, M., SA; also see D. S. Margoliouth "Wahhābīya", *SEI*, pp. 618-21 (Indian portion on p. 621).
142. See Farquhar, pp. 101-111.
143. See Westcott, G. H. *Kabīr and Kabīr Panth*, 2nd ed., Calcutta, 1953, P. 2.
144. Quoted in Bhagi, p. 113.,

the thirteenth century.[145] Similar literary works on Hindu religion, written by Ṣūfīs, have been mentioned by Kshitimohan Sen. Of These, Ḥasan Niẓāmī's *Two Prophets of India : Rāma and Kṛṣṇa Peace be on Them*; and Mālik Muḥammad Jayasī's *The Padmavati*, are worth noting.[146] We do not intend to go beyond the time of Kabīr. To be sure, the interactions between the two religions were multiplied during the centuries after Kabīr.

In the foregoing pages we have presented a picture of the interactions that took place between Hinduism and Islām for many centuries, though our account by no means is exhaustive. One of the first things that we have shown is that the influence was mutual and by no means one-sided. Emphasising this point, Titus maintains : "If the Indian environment has produced a profound effect on Islām during its long residence in the country, it is no less true that Islām has in turn reacted on Hinduism and Indian life."[147] It may be stressed that the Ṣūfīs were primarily responsible for creating the atmosphere of interaction and harmony between the two systems. It may be asked : if the Ṣūfīs were that important as a factor in establishing good relations with the Hindus and championed the cause of Islām in a peaceful way, why is there not more information about their manifold activities ? The answer is not too far to seek. Firstly, the Ṣūfīs themselves did not write many things about their activities, for they were not interested in literary or theoretical things. Their spiritual life was rather practical. Secondly, Indian Ṣūfīs did not evolve any new theory requiring literary explanation. Before the coming of the Ṣūfīs to India, the situation created by Muslim conquests was one of prejudice and apathy, if not enmity, between the two communities.

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145. Cf. SIC, 135.

146. Cf. Sen, pp. 34-35. Mālik Muḥammad Jaẏasī (d. 1540) was the disciple of the Chishtīya Ṣūfī Muḥyī-ud-Dīn. Mālik studied Sanskrit poetics with Hindu pandits and wrote under the inspiration of Kabīr's teaching. The *Padmavati* is a beautiful Hindi poem treating allegorically the relation between the Divine Spirit and the individual human soul.

Ḥasan Niẓāmī was the descendant of Niẓām-ud-Dīn Awliyā. Niẓāmī contends that according to the Qur'ān, God sends His *paygambbars* (apostles) in all parts of the world. How can this be untrue with regard to India ? So Rāma, Kṛṣṇa and the Buddha are the *paygambbars* of India and the teachings of these seers carry authority.

147. *Op. cit.*, p. 172.

Though the Muslims had established their military and political supremacy by virtue of their superior military organisation, it would appear that the Muslim minority would not be able to continue their rule over the majority who differed from them in race, religion, culture and language. The conservative theologians who were fanatically dogmatic in their outlook rarely appreciated the change in the modes of the time and seldom tried to reconstruct their religious thought in accordance with the needs of the time. The Ṣūfīs, however, "rose to the occasion and released syncretic forces which liquidated social, ideological, and linguistic barriers" between the Hindus and the Muslims "and helped in the development of a common cultural outlook."[148] Finally, the absence of information about the Ṣūfīs and their intense activities in India in the records of the historians of the kings and emperors may be explained by saying that those historians, who worked under royal patronage, tried to glorify the names of those Muslim monarchs who so frequently styled themselves defenders and propagators of their faith.

At any rate, the situation that arose out of this interaction was one of the most uncommon and spectacular in the history of mankind. A well-worded statement by Sir John Marshall describes the picture :

> Seldom in the history of mankind has the spectacle been witnessed of two civilizations, so vast and so strangely developed, yet so radically dissimilar, as the Muḥammadan and the Hindu, meeting and mingling together. The very contrasts which existed between them, the wide divergence on their culture and their religions, make the history of their impact peculiarly instructive.[149]

In the above pages we have tried to point out all the important features of Ṣūfīsm. In a nutshell, they are : monotheism, equality of man, love of God, purity of heart for devotion to God, longing for union with God, dependence on God's mercy, and, finally, disregard for formal religion. Now let us see at which level of Hindu mysticism the Ṣūfīs could meet it with their ideals as enumerated above.

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148. ARPI, 262; also see Mujeeb, 161.
149. Haig, W. (ed.), CHI, III, 568 cited by 'Abdul Qādir, LI, 287.

People commonly speak of "mystic India." As against Islām, where mysticism developed against odds, India is the home of mysticism. It is "the very stuff and substance of religion" in India. Thus R. C. Zaehner calls India the "high school of mysticism."[150] Ṣūfīsm, as we have noticed before, is a mysticism which is conditioned by a monotheistic creed, Hinduism, on the other hand, is free from any such guideline. Professor S. N. Dasgupta has distinguished four different kinds of Hindu mysticism, viz., the sacrificial, the Upaniṣadic, the Yogic (we are not concerned with the Buddhistic) and the *Bhakti*. Now let us see what are the common points among them and how far they are in agreement or disagreement with Ṣūfī ideas.

To all varieties of Hindu mysticism, with the exception of *bhakti*, the ascetic discipline, which means turning one's back on this world (*vairāgya*), is a common starting point. The purpose of all Indian mysticism is *mokṣa* (release or liberation) from the human and conditioned state called *saṁsāra*. But that does not mean union or communion with God. Although it corresponds to the purity of heart of the Ṣūfīs, remarks Zaehner, yet "does not carry with it the additional implication of nearness to God."[151] In the Vedic religion sacrifice was offered not to achieve *mokṣa* but to appease the gods to grant the sacrificer safety against natural calamity. And, in the Vedic hymns though the idea of love or *śraddhā* for gods is not completely absent but the idea of longing for union with the gods was lacking.[152] Moreover, by no means can Vedic religion be regarded as monotheistic.

Dasgupta sums up the leading mystical ideas of the Upaniṣads as follows :

The chief features of this Upaniṣad mysticism are the earnest and sincere quest for this spiritual illumination, the rapturous delight and force that characterize the utterance of the sages when they speak of the realization of this ineffable experience, the ultimate and absolute truth and reality, and the immortality of all mortal things. Yet this quest is not the quest of

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150. HMM, 3.
151. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
152. See HM 119-20; also see Goswāmī, B. K., BCAI, 3.

the God of the theists. This highest reality is no individual person separate from us, or one whom we try to please, or whose law and commands we obey, or to whose will we submit with reverence and devotion. It is, rather, a totality of partless, simple and undifferentiated experience and which is at once the ultimate essence of our self and the highest principle of the universe, the Brahman or the Ātman.[153]

In other words, man sees his innermost essence as being fundamentally identical with the common source of all things, and he can, therefore, say, "I am this All" or "I am Brahman." This is usually called pantheism: the soul is regarded as coterminous with all that is and, therefore, with God. This absolute identity of the human soul (*ātman*) with the universal soul (*Brahman*) is the essence of the Upaniṣadic teaching. It is also basic to Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta. But in this teaching of the Upaniṣadic mysticism there is no trace of what is called love for God and longing for a union with Him. In fact, *Brahman* cannot be regarded as God: It is an all-pervading principle, whereas the Ṣūfīs conceive of God as the Lord of the Universe with whom they think of having an intimate relationship and thus long for a personal communion. This is the essence of Ṣūfī theosophy. In Ṣūfīsm however, are found monotheism, pantheism and even monism. The cases of Bistāmī, Abū Sa'īd ibn Abī'l Khayr and Ibn al-'Arābī are cases in point.[154]

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153. HM, 42 cited in HMM, 7-8.

154. Cf. *supra* (pp. 35-39, 42-43, 50). Shaykh Muḥyī-ud-Dīn Ibn al-'Arabī (1165-1240) expounded the doctrine of *Waḥdat al-Wajūd* (Unity of Being or Ontological Monism). His conception of "*Waḥdat al-Wajūd*" seems to be an extension of the Islamic doctrine of "*Tawḥīd*": i.e. the doctrine that "there is nothing in existence except God." 'Arabī's system is regarded as an overt monism. He asserted the identity of the *Ḥaqq* and *khalq*—the Creator and the created. According to him, God is the unity behind all the plurality and the Reality behind all phenomenal appearances: "There is nothing but God, nothing is existence other than He; there is not even a 'there' where the essence of all things is one."

The teachings of Ibn al-'Arabī were generally condemned by the orthodox Ṣūfīs who found in its complexity and unreconciled contradiction a great danger to mystical theosophy. However, in fourteenth century his doctrine came to India, and Shaykh Sharf-ud-Dīn Yaḥyā Manerī, who belonged to the Firdawsīya order of Ṣūfīs which was a branch of the Suhrawardīya order, was the first Indian Ṣūfī to attempt to reconcile the doctrine of Ibn al-'Arabī with the *sharī'ah*.

Quite different from Upaniṣadic mysticism is the Yogic. This is expressed in the words *Viveka-jñāna* (knowledge of difference), that is, to know the difference between eternal being (*puruṣa(s)*, soul(s) and the eternal matter (*Prakṛti*). The problem in Yoga (also in Sāṅkhya) is stated thus: under the influence of *Prakṛti*, *Puruṣa*, which is completely different from the former, and inactive, conceives itself as one with the former, and the activities of the former as its own. This is the cause of *saṁsāra* for the soul; and when it realises its absolute difference from the *Prakṛti*, the *Puruṣa* or the soul attains release from the bondage (*saṁsāra*).

Now if we compare the yoga mysticism with that of Islām, it will appear that they are poles apart. Although unlike the atheistic Sāṅkhya, the Yoga system conceives of the existence of a God, yet He is not the Creator God or the Lord of the universe, whereas the Ṣūfī conception of God is the One eternal God, who is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. For the Yoga there are two eternals—*Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, whereas for the Ṣūfīs God (Allāh) alone is eternal. In other words, Ṣūfism is monotheistic and theistic. Yoga mysticism, on the contrary, is neither. It implies a non-theistic orientation. What is more important is that while the aim of the Yoga for Patañjali is discrimination between subject and object—*Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*, that is, to attain the purity of the self by discrimina-

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In 'Arabī's system implies the immanence of the Divine Being. He was aware of the danger that lies in it, that it might lead to polytheism which he rejected. In order to escape this danger, he laid emphasis on the principle of love, which binds all beings together. Thus according to him, the highest manifestation in which God is worshipped is love. Any way, Ibn al-'Arabī's *Waḥdat al- Wajūd* was challenged for the first time by Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī in India in the early seventeenth century who evolved as against 'Arabī's, the doctrine of *Waḥdat al- Shuhūd* (Phenomenological Monism) as explaining the correct relationship between man and God, or say, between Creator and the created (for 'Arabī's doctrine see his *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīya*, Bulaq, 1274 A. H.; Cairo, 1329 A. H.; T.H. Weir, "Ibn (Al-) 'Arabī", *SEI*, 146; MIC, 50; for Sirhindī's doctrine see Friedmann, Y.R., "Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī: An Outline of his Thought and a Study of his Image in the Eyes of Posterity", Institute of Islāmic Studies, McGill University, Montreal, 1966.

What is interesting for us in explaining Ibn al-'Arabī's doctrine and that of Sirhindī is that the former corresponds to the doctrine of Śaṅkara while the latter is at par with Rāmānuja, though no visible relationship can be traced. These may be the results of indirect influence of Vedānta mysticism on Islāmic mysticism.

ting between *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*. In other words, it is a methodic isolation from the Nature, and consequent union with the *Puruṣa*. Unlike the Ṣūfī's God, the *Puruṣa* does not give grace and the yogi does not have any passionate love for the union as the Ṣūfī has.

According to the definitions of mysticism given by different writers, it is a "phenomenon of the universal yearning of the human spirit for personal communion with God." This is true of Ṣūfīsm and other mysticism, but not a trace of love or longing for communion with God do we find in sacrificial, or Upaniṣadic or Yogic mysticism. If they have any yearning at all, it was for *mokṣa* from our conditioned humanity into our true immortal state which is beyond time and space.

However, in the *Gītā*, where God appears to be different from both human soul and the created universe, the elements of love and God's grace, and a stronger tendency of monotheism have appeared. Here we have the beginnings of *bhakti* mysticism, and this is more nearly comparable to Ṣūfīsm which is essentially a mysticism of love. Thus, R. C. Majumdar has drawn the points of similarity between Ṣūfīsm and *bhakti* mysticism in the following words :

> The striking similarities between them are, in particular the stress on the approach to God through love, intellect and intellectual life being regarded not only as valueless but almost a positive hindrance. Among other similarities or common features may be noted—(1) physical exercise like restraining of breath, (2) service and submission to pīr or guru, (3) recitation of sacred word, (4) toleration of other religions, and (5) belief in union with the Supreme Being through love and bhakti. The general liberal and unorthodox attitude regarding rituals and ceremonies is also another point common between them. It has been pointed out that not only in ideology, but also in the poetic representation of the same, there is a general similarity between the poetry of the medieval saints and Ṣūfī poets on the one hand and the Buddhist Sahajiyas on the other. It is therefore argued that medieval mysticism is a product of the reaction of Ṣūfīsm against the Sahajiya background. One may therefore reasonably believe in a close contact between the two

and their deep influence on each other, resulting in the evolution of what may be called medieval saints of mysticism. Besides interaction, which is indeterminable, we should not exclude other factors, such as the normal evolution of religious ideas, in order to explain the rise and growth of bhakti movement which is a mystical movement.[155]

Let us now turn to *bhakti* mysticism. Before entering into discussions on *bhakti*, it should be made clear that although *bhakti* is expounded in the *Gītā* quite elaborately, yet we do not propose to begin our discussions of the *bhakti* mysticism with the *Gītā* for the following reasons. Firstly, the *bhakti* in the *Gītā* is more or less a sectarian religious matter for the Bhāgavata sect; it did not become a religion of the masses. Secondly, although the *Gītā* represents the doctrine of the *Pañcarātra* and of the *Ekāntika Dharma*, yet we cannot say that it contains that monotheism which the Ṣūfīs stood for and which dominates the theme of all *bhakti* schools beginning in the Tamil land during the early years of the Christian era. Although the *Gītā* has introduced the warmth of *bhakti* and attached great value to the moral purpose of life, yet it could not present a pure monotheism as the *bhakti* implies. Thirdly, the *Gītā-bhakti* does not exclusively represent the ideal of brotherhood and equality of all men which was the characteristic feature of Ṣūfīs, and all *bhaktas* including Kabīr. In the *Gītā*, on the contrary, is found the traditional classification of men into four castes. This shortcoming of the *Gītā* is explained by the fact that the author of the *Gitā* who believed in the Brāhmanic tradition had no courage or intention to make a departure from that tradition. Moreover, in the *Gītā* no special weight is given to *bhakti*; it rather sees all the three paths, namely, *Jñana*, *Karma* and *Bhakti*, to be interrelated and thus equally important.[156]

Another important Sanskrit work on *bhakti*, it may be mentioned here is the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Although it emphasises the superiority of *bhakti*, it does not deny the efficacy of the

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155. HCIP, VI, 554.

156. Cf. Śrī Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gītā*, New York, 1950, pp.27-28, 35; also see MIC, 6-8."The Influence of Islām on the Cult of Bhakti in Medieval India", ISC, VII (1933), 644-45.

other methods, viz., *jñāna*, *Karma* and *Yoga*. But neither does this book make a break with the older tradition. Speaking about these two works, Dasgupta maintains : "Both the Gītā and Bhāgavata Purāṇa criticise the older course of the Vedic sacrifices, but neither of them had the boldness to pass an unconditional condemnation."[157] This meakness on the part of these works makes their kind of *bhakti* different from that of Ṣūfīs and the *bhaktas*; some of them gave absolute supremacy to *bhakti* in disregard to all other methods, on the other hand, and effected a complete departure from the age-old tradition. Finally, unlike the *Gītā* and the other traditional works pertaining to *bhakti*, the Ṣūfīs and the *bhaktas* abandoned the Hindu and Muslim sacred languages, namely, Sanskrit and Arabic and in their stead adopted vernacular language in order to make their message understandable and appealing to the general populace. Kabīr is the best exponent of this kind of *bhakti* mysticism.

In the foregoing pages we have examined the principal ideas of Ṣūfīsm. In that, we have noticed that in the process of the interaction between the two faiths, *bi-shara'* Ṣūfīs at first borrowed some of the Indian ideas and then in turn stimulated and contributed some ideas to Indian mysticism. We have also tried to show that the non-orthodox wing of Ṣūfīsm could not join hands with the orthodox sections of Hindu mysticism. But the *bhakti* type of Hindu mysticism having similarity in ideas with the radical wing of Ṣūfīsm could interact freely.

We have emphasised that although Kabīr was one of the Ṣūfīs he was different from all other Ṣūfīs; and we have indicated the points of difference and agreement between him and a few Ṣūfīs of his line. By doing so, we wanted to show how Kabīr's mysticism was the culmination of that process of mystical attitude which established an inter-religious mysticism for following religious life in disregard to all formal religions. We also stress that while Kabīr was one of the *bhaktas*, in many respects his system was different from all other *bhaktas* who preceded him. In order for us to substantiate this contention,

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157. HM, 24.

it is necessary that we should briefly examine all the important *bhaktas* before him. As is well known, the *bhakti* movement had two phases — the first phase arose and developed in South India while the second phase began in North India at the beginning of the fifteenth century. In the next chapter, we propose to discuss the first phase beginning in the Tamil land up to the time of Rāmānanda, the great *bhakta* of the South who took the movement to the North. In discussing pre-Kabīr *bhakti* movement, it may be mentioned here, we do not intend to go into the details of any particular individual *bhakta* and his doctrines; we would rather confine our examination to those principles that can be paralleled to Ṣūfī ideals enumerated before. In doing so, we intend to assess how far the interaction of Hindu-Muslim ideas engendered the *bhakti* movement as a whole, on the one hand, and particularly helped the rise of Kabīr's system, on the other.

CHAPTER III

Interaction Through Bhakti Mysticism

RELIGIOUS terms are in many cases very complex and rich, owing to the fact that they have been influenced by diverse currents of thought. In the case of the term *bhakti* Aryan or Hindu, Dravidian, Islamic, Christian, influences can all be seen and a simple definition would not suffice to bring out its real meaning. Moreover, we must not ignore the fact that words and concepts acquire new meaning, or at least new shades of meaning, in the various stages of their development and in particular contexts, and that they gain new force, as they express the religious experience of a people. In view of this fact, we propose to investigate the etymological significance of the Sanskrit term *bhakti* and its Tamil equivalent *aṉpu*, and then try to focus attention on the doctrinal or religious context in which the term is usually used. As a symbol of the love of a religious man for his God, *bhakti* means far more than can be conveyed by its literary signification. However, the importance of literary usage cannot be overlooked since the term was not used in literature arbitrarily and at random.

ETYMOLOGY OF THE TERMS BHAKTI AND AṆPU

Etymologically, the term *bhakti* is derived from the root *bhaj* which signifies resorting to and then loving the thing resorted to.[1] Here the word *love* is used in relation to both persons and things or actions, and its employment for religious purposes is considered central to its meaning. However, the word has also a passive sense which means being resorted to, liked or loved. General and special prefixes and terminations are often used with the root which indicate the nature of the object to whom or from whom love is exchanged. Hence R. G. Bhandarkar says,

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1. Cf. *Pāṇini*, 4.3.95.

"Thus the idea of love was associated with the word in early times, though it then signified loved instead of love."[2]

M. Dhavamony maintains that *bhaj* in religious usage would convey the meaning of choosing God as one's part, or worshipping, adoring, loving God. It was used in the Vedic literature in the sense of mechanical participation in a sacrificial rite. In later literature, it was very often used to express the personal relationship between a religious man and God.[3] *Bhakti*, therefore, expresses the idea of participation and sharing. The word, however, can have different connotations according to context. It would express a personal emotion when used to explain interpersonal relations. It can be charged with emotions of affection. It may take a reverential and religious character, as it did in the religious literature of India during the period of our investigation.

Bhakti in a religious context means man's love for God and *vice versa*. *Bhakti* in the first sense is used in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* (6.23). In the second sense, it is used by a devotee addressing his beloved goddess: "O Mother Lakṣmi, show your love (favour) to any one else and do not seek mine! Those who long for pleasure are in your power; what can you do over those who have desire no more?"[4]

These examples demonstrate that the idea implied in *bhakti* and the religious usage of it suppose a god or a personified god or a spiritual preceptor (guru) to whom personal reverence, love and devotion are directed.

As a technical religious term, *bhakti* is considered to be the most difficult word to translate. The term assumes different doctrinal connotations, yet the best rendering of it suggested is: "godward love in utter self-surrender." Nonetheless, "loving devotion" is used generally and that seems to be the most comprehensive rendering in the shortest form.[5] At the same time, the idea of "participation" in the divine is also implied, not in

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2. VŚMRS, 29. For further etymological analysis see Dhavamony, M., LGSS, 12-14; Burrow, T., SL, 77, 168.

3. *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 22; also see G. A. Grierson, "*Bhakti-Marga*", ERE, II (1910), 539.

the impersonal sense of causal determinism, but as L. Renou defines *bhakti*, in the personal sense of "*participation amoureuse*" (effective participation of the soul in the divine).[6] Therefore, we propose to use "loving devotion" as the most appropriate rendering of *bhakti*. It may be emphasised here that "bhakti always entails a theistic attitude with strong leanings towards at least a practical monotheism."[7]

Aṉpu in its general sense signifies love, attachment, piety, friendship, benevolence and devotion to those related to oneself. The etymology of the term *aṉpu* is uncertain, but the word *ani*, which means to approach or to love, has been suggested as the root whence *aṉpu* derives.[8]

But when *aṉpu* is used in a religious context, it becomes charged with a deep religious sense. For example :

To those who love him, the Lord is love,
He is faithful.
The blissful silent One, the gracious Masterplaced His feet on my head—
Lo, I realized myself and died to my [empirical] thought.

Tayumanavar thus proclaims that God is love for those who love Him, and that he is a faithful lover, who by his grace helps them to attain self-realization.

With hearts full of love if the devotees approach the temple of Nallur Perumanam rich [with salvific grace] and worship the sacred feet of my Father blissful, and render service, they will not suffer [the pain of death].[9]

It is clear that *aṉpu* in religious contexts means love towards God or God personified in total self-surrender and self-dedication, who alone grants grace and thus salvation to the devotee.

The concept of *bhakti* or the idea of a religion of loving devotion is as old as the time of the Upaniṣads, as Bhandarkar

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6. *Religions of Ancient India*, London, 1953, p. 72.

7. Dhavamony, p. 23; also see F. W. Hopkins, "The Epic use of Bhāgavat and Bhakti", *JRAS*, XLIII (1911), 727-38.

8. See Burrow, n. 279, p. 24; *ECLTL*, I, pt. III, 185. On the authority of Tolkappiyar, the oldest grammarian of Tamil, Dhavamony tells us that the term *aṉpu* is defined as "the love or attachment that creates a sense of mental satisfaction of pleasure in one's wife, parents, and relatives and that cements or binds them together" (n. 4, p. 24).

9. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 26.

asserts.[10] This idea, however, received a definite shape from the time of the *Gītā* and eventually led to the formation of an independent sect, namely, the Bhāgavata or the Sāttvata. Thus the *Gītā* is construed as the earliest exposition of the *bhakti* system or the *Ekāntika Dharma* (monotheistic religion). We have enumerated before the characteristic features of the *Gītā-bhakti* and explained how and why it differs from the *bhakti* cult that was initiated in south India probably under the influence of the Ṣūfīs. We, therefore, propose to enter into the discussions of the *bhakti* cult in south India without including the *Gītā-bhakti*, though relevant references to the *Gītā* will be made whenever it is necessary. In this discussion we will draw attention to specific instances of probable Ṣūfī influence on *bhakti* leaders, rather than describing the *bhakti* movements as such.

DEFINITIONS OF BHAKTI

Bhakti has been defined by many writers, all of whom are in essential agreement. Let us at first cite some definitions given by the *sūtra* writers. The best account of *bhakti* is contained in the *Aphorisms of Śāṇḍilya* (late ninth and early tenth century). He defines *bhakti* as an "affection fixed on God, Īśwara (*Sūtra*, 2).[11] *Bhakti* has been clearly distinguished from knowledge (*jñāna*), though it may be the result of knowledge (*Sūtra*, 27). *Bhakti* is not a worship in the sense of performing some outward acts. "It is simply and solely an affection directed to a person [a personal God], and not a belief in a system."[12] Śāṇḍilya makes another point clear, that *bhakti* can be practised by men of all castes including the Caṇḍālas or the Untouchables (*Sūtra*, 78). But the concession is not unqualified : the phrase "second-hand" in the *sūtra* implies that the author had in his mind the problem of the Caṇḍālas not being allowed to read the Vedas. In other words, the lower castes can learn about *bhakti* from others and not directly from the scriptures. This point brings us to another more important issue.

The *Śāṇḍilya Sūtra* advocates a kind of *bhakti* which is

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10. Cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.
11. Cowell, E. B. (tr.), AŚ, 2.
12. "Bhakti-Mārga", p. 539.

obviously based on the Veda, whereas the *bhaktas* of the Tamil land evolved *bhakti* out of their heart, that is, a mystical experience. And although they did not totally reject the Vedas, they valued their own compositions even higher than the Vedas. In fact, the Tamil *Prabhandam* is called the Tamil Veda. Moreover, the Tamil-*bhakti* became *The Religion* of the outcastes. In the case of Kabīr, however, the situation was different. He clearly rejected the Vedas, on the one hand, and threw the door of *bhakti* unequivocally open to the outcastes. In this respect, he differs from all *bhaktas* who preceded him, including his own guru, Rāmānanda, except, possibly, the Vīrasāiva or the Liṅgāyata sect.

Another sūtra writer was Nārada (late ninth and early tenth century).[13] His *Sūtras* refuse to connect *bhakti* with *arma* and *jñāna* at all. According to him, *bhakti* is all that matters, and everything else is of value only so far as it is auxiliary to *bhakti*. The path of *bhakti* should be followed to the exclusion of all others (*Sūtra*, 33). The superiority of *bhakti* lies in this, that it seeks no other reward but itself (*Sūtra*, 26). *Bhakti* is God-centred and God-intent (*Sūtras*, 67, 79). *Bhakti* can dispense with knowledge, for to the *bhakta* the Lord promptly reveals himself [*sic*] (*Sūtras*, 86-87).

As we see, *bhakti*, according to Nārada, stands much close to the attitude of the Teṇkalai or Southern learning of the school of Rāmānuja, which upholds the absolute superiority of *bhakti* and maintains that the *bhakta* has no obligations to perform except to remain in absolute dependence on God's mercy.

Many modern writers have presented quite comprehensive definitions of *bhakti*. Although it is neither necessary nor possible to include all these definitions, yet citation of some of them would help us to understand the attitude of these modern writers towards *bhakti*. The one conspicuous feature that is discernible in all these definitions is that of the catholicity and universality of *bhakti*. Thus Jadunath Sinha writes, "Bhakti is free from desire, and is of the nature of inhibition of all desires (*nirodha*)

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13. For fixing the dates of *Śāṇḍilya* and *Nārada Sūtras*, we are guided by J. N. Farquhar's dating. He says that both these *Sūtras* are clearly dependent on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, for which his suggested date 900 A.D. is usually accepted (See ORLI, 232, 233-34).

by which, however, is meant not the extinction of all desires, but the consecration of all desires and actions to God. Inhibition also means undivided or whole hearted devotion to God, indifference to all that is antagonistic to Him, and the giving up of all other supports."

"The need for liberation", continues the same writer, "leads one to devotion, the minimum qualification which entitles him to this way. The cult of *bhakti* is catholic, universal and open to all. Thus, the Bhāgavata religion of devotion is perfectly democratic."[14]

The above statement is an indication of what a modernist understands about *bhakti*, and what *bhakti* actually should have been from the very beginning. This attitude reflects what the *bhakti* movement was during the period under our examination. But as for the *bhakti* of the Bhāgavata sect, it would appear difficult to defend the statement that *bhakti* was universal and democratic. Although the spirit of catholicity and universality was not lacking, and all the important features that we find in the *bhakti* movements of our period were present in the Bhāgavata religion, yet the religion of devotion in the Bhāgavata did not become a universal religion due to the overwhelming domination of the Brāhmanic tradition on the whole society. The *bhakti* movement of our period, on the contrary, was actually a reaction against that Brāhmanic tradition. Thus one writer says forcefully, "The whole movement is an impassioned cry against the ossified ceremonial religion of the Brāhmans and the ideal of 'passionlessness' that they shared with the Buddhists and Jains. It was against these last that they launched their passionate crusade in the name of the One True God,...."[15] And it was only under the new impetus given by the Ṣūfīs, who profess a religion supremely catholic and liberal in character, did the *bhakti* movements become a religious movement of the masses and hence come to be called a democratic religion. This religion of devotion during the period under study transformed the whole face of Hindu religion and society. About the *bhakti* of this period, R. C. Zaehner observes: "Bhakti is the term used for a type of religion that seems to have

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14. Quoted in Bhagi, M. L., MICT, 164-65.
15. Zaehner, R. C., *Hinduism*, New York, 1966, p. 131.

originated in the Dravidian south; later it was to sweep the whole of India and utterly transform the face of Hinduism."[16]

Under the influence of the Ṣūfīs, the features of *bhakti* religion present in the *Gitā* and other Hindu religious literature, were augmented, revitalised and stimulated, and thus awakened the consciousness of the masses about the existence of a loving God who takes care of His sincere devotees. "A response to divine love", says one writer, "was possible as soon as the people were awakened to the existence and loving qualities of the supreme deity...."[17] The response from the people to the call of the saints was tremendous; the religion of devotion spread throughout the length and breadth of the country like wildfire and became the most dominant religion during the period under study. In view of this fact a recent writer observes :

> Seldom if ever in man's history has there been another tradition where the effective life of religion was sustained so consistently on such a lofty devotional plane. The devotee casts himself in absolute dependence upon the mercy and love of the supreme deity. The bhakti movement has remained the single most distinguishing characteristic of Hinduism from the opening centuries of the Christian era until the present day.[18]

The movement not only caught hold of the popular minds but also affected the thought of the intellectuals like philosophers Rāmānuja, Madhva and others as we shall see in the following pages. "The characteristic feature of medieval Hinduism", says Wm. T. De Bary, "is the great upsurge and the spread of devotional movements. However intense was the activity in the domain of metaphysics, the worship of a personal God, in one form or another, became the dominant trend and influenced even the schools of philosophy in the direction of theism."[19]

When the religion of devotion became democratic and universal, it became essentially a social religion, as it must be since it contains in it the element of love. All its poets sing of the joy of the fellowship of God and His saints. Thus Kabīr

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16. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
17. Berry, T., RIHYE, 40.
18. *Ibid.*
19. SIT, 327-28.

is reported to have said : "Saith Kabīr, To whom shall I tell this, that heaven is in the company of the saints ?" (*Ādi-Granth, Gauṛi* 10).

The social character of *bhakti* tended to inflame its ardour; its stress on emotions was mainly responsible for this. Thus some of the *bhakti* sects, like those of Caitanya, Mīrā Bāi and Vallabha developed to the extent of being erotic and hysterical: the devotees continuously singing, dancing, weeping and finally falling fainted. Undoubtedly, this kind of *bhakti* religion encouraged the influx of some of the aberrations that have brought discredit upon some *bhakti* sects. Hence a modern Bengalee scholar condemns *bhakti* as "inevitably disastrous in its consequences." "The body", he maintains, "is suddenly deprived of its guiding star"; it "wanders into the jungle of passions." "Headlong, unguided Bhakti makes for horrible degeneracy."[20]

We have endeavoured to show in the foregoing pages that there was an ancient *bhakti* in India which goes back to the Vedic period, and there was a classical *bhakti* which can be dated to the time of the Gītā. That means, all the ingredients of the *bhakti* religion are native to India; they are all present in the *Gītā* implicitly or explicitly. Obviously, no outside influence was needed for the coming into being of the religion of devotion. But the new upsurge of the *bhakti* movement that took place first in the south India and then in the North, which overwhelmed the whole country, is seen to be the result of foreign influences which stimulated the already existing ideas of *bhakti*. By and large, scholars are in agreement that it was the Ṣūfī brotherhood, which had been exerting its influence on Hindu society since the seventh century of the Christian era, which was responsible for the reawakening of the Indian mind; although some think that it was the Christian influence that caused the new *bhakti* movement. Let us examine briefly this dispute. While discussing this dispute, we have to remember that although the presence of a large number of Muslims and some Christians in the South is historically documented, their influence on the Hindus is hypothetical and speculative, for there is no clear evidence of such influence.

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20. Cited by Macnicol, N., LRIP, 93; also see Barth, A., RI, 230-33.

EXTERNAL INFLUENCE ON THE BHAKTI MOVEMENT

Here at first we have to recall the history of the coming of the Muslim traders to south India in the seventh century, and their missionary activity which we have described briefly in a previous chapter. We have noticed how intense and widespread was the proselytizing activity of those Muslim traders. We have also noticed that as a result of the interaction between the Hindus and the Muslims, not only did large numbers of individuals, including some Rājās, accept Islām, but often a few mixed sects also arose. These Muslim trader-missionaries were followed by the Ṣūfīs of whom also we have given a brief description in the previous chapter.

Apart from the possible Muslim influence on Hindu religion and society of the South, we may recall the religio-political unrest that was prevalent in the South in those days. Religiously, Hinduism entered into conflict with Buddhism and Jainism, and Vaiṣṇavism and the Śaivism were taking form. Politically, it was a period of great upheaval: the Chalukyas and the Pallavas entered into a deadly struggle in which both of them were worn out; and the Cheras were losing ascendency; on the ruins of these were to come up some new dynasties, like the Cholas, and at a later time the kingdom of Vijayanagar.[21]

It was thus a period of revolutionary activity in both religion and politics of the South. The minds of the people were greatly perturbed: they felt themselves freed from the stamp of old tradition, and thus were prone to accept new ideas from other quarters. It would appear that it was an opportune moment when Islām appeared on the scene with new ideas: a simple formula of faith with minimum rites based on strict monotheism; social equality, loving devotion to God; etc. Hence Zaehner remarks, "...most conversions were voluntary particularly among the outcastes or untouchables who saw in conversion a way of escape from an intolerable social degradation. Further, Islām is a supremely simple religion and its uncompromising

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21. See Majumdar, R.C. (ed.), HCIP, III, 240, and chs. xii and xiii, *passim*; Vol. IV: chs. vi and vii, *passim*; also see Aiyer, S.K.V., HSAD, bks., ii and iii, *passim*.

monotheism offered an attractive alternative to the complexities and imprecisions of the prevailing *dharma*."[22]

It is against this background, Tara Chand asserts:

> It may, therefore, be premised without overrating facts that if, in the development of the Hindu religions in the south, any foreign elements are found which make their appearance after the seventh century, and which cannot be accounted for by the natural development of Hinduism itself, they may with much probability be ascribed to the influence of Islām provided, of course, they are not alien to its genius.[23]

In the same tone, another writer says, "Now, it is precisely in these parts [of south India] that, from the ninth to the twelfth century, those great religious movements took their rise which are connected with the names of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Ānandatīrtha, and Basava, out of which the majority of the historical sects came, and to which Hindustan presents nothing analogous till a much later period."[24] And in this context some influence of Islām on even Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja has been suggested by some writers.[25]

However, some writers, such as A. C. Burnett,[26] Max weber,[27] R. G. Bhandarkar,[28] think that it was the Christian influence which engendered the *bhakti* movement in south India.[29] But A. Barth,[30] Yūsuf Ḥusain,[31] Tara Chand,[32] and others reject the

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22. Italic is mine. *Hinduism*, p. 137; also see Tara Chand, IIIC, 33-34, 84-86.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
24. Barth, p. 211.
25. See Humayūn Kabīr, CHIB, IV, 587-88.
26. *On Some Pahlavi Inscriptions in South India*, Mangalore, 1837, p. 14.
27. *The Religion of India : The Sociology of Hindūism and Buddhism*, New York, 1958, p. 307.
28. *Op. cit.*, p. 57.
29. One of their theses is that there is a parallelism between the legend of Jesus and that of Kṛṣṇa (see Barth, pp. 219-20; also cf. "Bhakti-Marga", p. 550; Rev. C. E. Abraham, "The Rise and Growth of Christianity in India", in CHIB, IV, 547-70.
30. *Op. cit.*, pp. 212, 220-21.
31. GMIC, 4.
32. *Op. cit.*, pp. 112-14.

thesis of Christian influence.[33] These writers maintain that unlike the Muslims, the Christians are not reported in history to have carried out any widespread missionary programme. They also argue that in fact Islām was not the originator of *bhakti* in south India or India as a whole, rather Islām provided a fresh life to the already existing ideas pertaining to a religion of devotion. Hence Tara Chand holds, "It is necessary to repeat that most of the elements in the southern schools of devotion and philosophy, taken singly, were derived from ancient systems; but the elements in their totality and in their peculiar emphasis betray a singular approximation to the Muslim faith and therefore make the arguments for Islamic influence probable."[34]

As we see, there is a general agreement among the writers about the influence of Islām on Hindu religion and society which possibly led to the flaring up of the *bhakti* cult. The extent of this influence, however, cannot be determined for we do not possess any detailed records of the activities of the Muslim missionaries. One thing is certain that they lived in the society in large numbers alongside the Hindus, and their very presence must have created the atmosphere for the interaction between the two communities. A. Barth stresses the point that neither Christianity nor Islām had exerted any significant influence on Hindu thologey, which appears sufficiently accounted for by reference to its own resources; "but it is very possible that

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33. Referring to F. Fawcett, Humāyūn Kabīr informs us that the writer in his notes on the people of Malabar suggests that the growth of *bhakti* in south India was due mainly to the influence of Islām. Fawcett also points out that Christianity was then not sufficiently important to influence Hindu thought. He cites the tradition that the Rājā of Kāladi, where Śaṅkara was born, had been converted to Islām at the time of Śaṅkara's birth (see Humāyūn Kabīr, p. 587; also cf. F. Fawcett, "Nayārs of Malabar", *Madras Government Museum Bulletin* (*Anthropology*), Madras, 1915, Vol. III, No. 3, reprinted from the edition of 1901;....., "A Popular Mopla Song", IA, XXVIII (1899), 64-71). Those who are opposed to Christian influence, contend that though the possibility of the existence of a small community of the Christians cannot be ruled out, the large number of Muslims who took to vigorous missionary work, and who had support from the local Rājās were certainly in a better position than the "poor and destitute Churches of the Malabar and Coromandal Coasts" (see Barth, p. 212).

34. *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

indirectly, and merely as it were by their [Muslims'] presence, they contributed in some degree towards the budding and bursting forth of those great religious reforms which, in the absence of doctrines altogether new, introduced into Hinduism a new organization and a new spirit,..."[35] Replying to those who maintain that the idea of *bhakti* as a means and condition of salvation, and monotheism were borrowed from Christianity, R. C. Majumdar says: "Islām is now substituted for Christianity as the source of both the ideas." "The evidence of such a close contact with Christianity", continues Majumdar, "as may reasonably support the idea of borrowing from each other is entirely lacking. The question is more complicated in regard to Islām."[36] According to Majumdar, the contact between Hinduism and Islām before the twelfth century was not enough to prove permanent influence or borrowing. The situation, however, thinks Majumdar, was different after the twelfth century when Islām established itself in India and penetrated its roots more and more deeply as centuries passed. "There can be hardly any doubts", asserts Majumdar, "that the impact of Islām was felt by the Hindus, and a class of Muslim thinkers was influenced by the rich heritage of thought in India."[37] That is to say, it is certain that interaction between the two faiths took place.

Those who favour the indigenous origin of *bhakti*, such as N. Macnicol,[38] Yūsuf Ḥusain and others, uphold the universality of *bhakti* and maintain that Islām (Ṣūfīsm) only helped in creating the atmosphere for the upsurge that took place beginning in early medieval India. Thus Yūsuf Ḥusain emphasises, "Bhakti is not at all specifically Semitic. It is a sentiment everywhere diffused. It came to birth quite naturally in India when devotion turned to a single personal God. Bhakti, in the sense understood in India, is a devotion full of affection, and the traditions by which it is inspired belong to Aryan as much as to Semitic thought."[39]

At any rate, we have no intention to assert that in its evolution and development *bhakti* cult never underwent any external

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35. *Op. cit.*, pp. 211-12.
36. HCIP, VI, 552.
37. *Ibid.*
38. RQIIT, Appn. C, p. 277.
39. *Op. cit.*, pp. 5-6.

influence. We have noticed before that after the arrival of Islām and its missionaries in India interaction and assimilation between Hinduism and Islām took place in many segments of their life; as a result both religions were modified at least on the mystical plane. Hence U.C. Bhattacharjee suggests that though the exact extent of Christian or Muslim influence on Hinduism is difficult to assess, there is definitely a "theistic urge" in Indian religion and philosophy in the period of early Muslim settlements in the Deccan which "finds powerful expression in many Vedāntic writers who came after Śaṅkara."[40]

The question of whether Christianity or Ṣūfīsm influenced *bhakti* cult is difficult to decide conclusively. One of the reasons for this difficulty is the fact that in its development Ṣūfīsm was influenced by Christian mysticism, as we have noticed before. Nevertheless, Ṣūfīsm retained its distinguishing marks, such as strict monotheism, egalitarianism, and the doctrine of divine love which are conspicuous in all *bhakti* sects. Hence George Grierson suggests that the Hindu "Bhāgavats" whose youth had been passed in a Muslim atmosphere must have been influenced by the Ṣūfīs.[41] As for Christianity, Zaehner strikes a strong note and says that it is not a strictly monotheistic religion "because it introduces into a monotheistic system an idea that is wholly foreign to it namely, the Incarnation of God in the Person of Jesus Christ."[42] Such an idea is repulsive to Ṣūfīsm as Kabīr represents it, though some heterodox Ṣūfīs, e.g. Hallāj had earlier spoken of it. At any rate, striking similarities are found between some Ṣūfī ideas and some ideas of some *bhakti* leaders. This makes the possibility of mutual influence between them more reasonable.

Having discussed the question of the origin of *bhakti*, and possible Ṣūfī influence in revitalising it and thus makingit a popular religious movement of the Indian masses which swept the entire land as a mighty flood, we propose to turn to the actual movement in the Tamil land.

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40. PHCI, V, 459.
41. "Bhakti-Mārga", p. 550.
42. HMM, 2.

THE ŚAIVITES OF THE SOUTH

It seems difficult to fix any chronology of the Śaivite and the Vaiṣṇavite *bhaktas* of the Dravidian Tamil lands who first set in motion the movement of the *bhakti* cult which subsequently engulfed the whole country. From all information, they seem to have appeared in the seventh century of the Christian era,[43] the time when the Muslim traders were carrying out their vigorous missionary work. We propose, however, to examine at first the Śaivites. We do not intend to go into the details of the whole Śaivite system but will examine the principal points of the school. The teachers of this school are called by a generic name — the Nāyaṇārs or the Adiyārs. At first there were three saints (called The Three), viz., Nāṇasambandhār, Appar, and Sundaramūrti. They were poet-singers, filled with the emotion of *bhakti* towards Śiva. They wandered from temple to temple, singing their hymns and dancing in rapture before the images of Śiva and Umā. Large crowds flocked around them. They did not show any dependence on the Śiva Āgamas, but used the Epics and the Purāṇas[44] and expressed "the traditional piety and devotion of the community."[45] Appar is considered to have been the most eloquent poet, "The Devout Prince of Song", whose hymns came to be sung in temples. His hymns in Tamil "contained the quintessence of the Vedas and were thus in substance one with them", remarks one writer.[46] Let us illustrate some of his devotional songs. He considers every perfection in man and in nature as a sign of God's love and goodness towards mankind :

> Clothing my bones with muscles and skin to give me [human] form, making me happy by the removal of *karmea*, dwelling in my heart as in a temple, showing me love, accepting me as his servant, he showers on me his grace.[47]

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43. See RLI, 187, 196; also see S. S. Piḷḷai, "The Śaiva Saints of South India", in CHIB, IV, 339-48.

44. Among the Purāṇas that directed primarily toward the worship of Śiva are the *Vāyū*, *Liṅga*, and *Kūrma Purāṇas*.

45. RLI, 196-97.

46. Piḷḷai, p. 342; also cf. Dhavamony, pp. 150 ff.; Berry, pp. 48-49.

47. Quoted in Dhavamony, p. 150.

God is the immense ocean of wisdom whose nature is goodness. To the faithful bhaktas he is true and loyal, i.e, he manifests his real nature; he is unattainable by people without bhakti, whose deeds are born of a mind like iron (are hard-hearted); i.e. he hids his real nature from them, so that they conclude that there is no God.

He is never hard to find, but he lives in the mind of good bhaktas; he is the innermost secret of all religion and of the sacred Scriptures; he is inscrutable; he is honey and milk and shining light. He is the king of the gods, immanent in Viṣṇu, Brahmā, in flame, in wind, in the mountains, sea.[48]

Appar addresses God as father, mother and relative :

You are my father, my mother, my teacher. You are my loving uncle and aunt; you are my fair lady, my rich treasure; you are my family, my relatives, my home.[49]

Appar had a profound sense of sin, and hence his *bhakti* was marked by a penitence and repentence that is characteristic of Ṣūfīsm's *tawba*,[50] and unusual in Hinduism. Like the Ṣūfīs, and also Kabīr, he confesses that he has done many sinful deeds because he did not know the true nature of God and of himself. Again, like the Ṣūfīs, he begs pardon and forgiveness of God for his sins. He poetically expresses his sinful state and implores help. "I am on a raft in the sea of life, wrecked on the rock of lust and egoism. I cry for help." Then he says :

My race is evil, my character evil; my ways evil; my sin is great; even my good is evil; I am sinful and foolish; I do not join [the company of] the good; I am not beast and yet I do not forsake the ways of the beast. I talk big [exhorting men] what to hate; poor sinful wretch that I am, I only beg and never give [to the needy].[51]

These verses give us a clear picture of the nature of his *bhakti* teaching. Apart from the element of love and devotion (*bhakti*),

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48. *Ibid.*, p. 151.

49. *Ibid.*

50. See L. Massignon, "Taṣawwuf", *SEI*, 579 ff; R. A. Nicholson, "Tawba", *ibid*, p. 586; Q. 2.37 sqq.

51. Cited by Dhavamony, p. 153; also see Kingsbury, F., and Phillips, G. E., *Hymns of the Tamil Śaivite Saints*, London, 1921, p. 43.

which, of course, is the basis of his teaching, we find a strong tendency to monotheism, which seems to be Ṣūfīstic. Appar directs his love and worship to one God, Śiva, though he recognises Brahmā and Viṣṇu as other manifestations. On this point his teaching differs from that of Ṣūfīs in general and Kabīr in particular, for they do not acknowledge any other gods or beings as manifestation of one God. But there are other similarities. Appar calls God a "light" for which there is a clear reference in the Qur'ān (24.35). This is one of the verses of the Qur'ān that we have counted in our account for the Islāmic origin of Ṣūfīsm. Then, like the Ṣūfīs (including Kabīr) Appar considers man's heart as the dwelling place of God, to which allusion has been made before. In expressing his intimate relationship with God and addressing Him as Father, Mother, etc., Appar stands within the fold of universal mysticism. "The idea of God as father", says S. N. Dasgupta, "is indeed as old as the Vedas."[52] It is also expressed in several passages of the *Gītā* (9.17; 11.43, 44; 14.4), and elsewhere in Hindu religious literature. It is also as old as Christianity and Islām. But in the *bhakti* cult this expression of God as father or creator and supporter, etc., is subordinated to the conception of God as the nearest and the dearest. This conception of God in relation to man is mystical — Aryan as well as Semitic. What seems clear is that at the meeting of the two mysticisms — Hindu and Muslim — the conception which is characteristic of the *bhakti* cult becomes intensified.

To Appar, heart-felt love is all that matters in every service or worship of God. This being his attitude, he openly criticised the formalism of Hinduism. He says :

> Why bathe in the Ganges or Kaveri ? Why go to Kanyakumari in the land of Konku ? Why bathe in the waters of the roaring sea ? No release except to those who call upon the Lord everywhere.
>
> Why chant the Vedas, hear the Śāstras' lore ? Why learn daily the books of right conduct ? Why know the six Vedāṅgas again and again ? No release except to those who constantly meditate on the Lord.

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52. HM, 141.

> Why fast and starve, why do penance on mountaintops ? Why go to bathe in waters far and wide? No release but for those who always call on the Lord [for help].[53]

In this overt rejection of formal religion, Appar stands as a predecessor to Kabīr.

The immense output of mystical hymns by the Śaivite Nāyaṇārs which contributed to the rise and growth of Śaivite form of *bhakti* religion and thus reviving Hinduism against the currents of Buddhism and Jainism in the Tamil land, reached its climax in the *Tiru-Vāchakam* (The Sacred Utterance) of Mānikka-Vāchakar, "whose utterances are rubies", the last of the Tamil Śaivite poet-mystics. He lived about 900 A.D., gifted with a powerful intellect and with a genius for administration. He became the prime minister of the Pandya king, Arimarttaṇār. But power and position could not delude him; responding to an inner call, he renounced the world and became a wandering devotee of Śiva. In his lyrical poems, Mānikka-Vāchakar freely uses the stories of the Epics, the Purāṇas and the Āgamas.[54] He is generally recognised as the finest of all Nāyaṇārs; was able to express the deepest religious emotions of the human heart. Thus his *Tiru-Vāchakam* is daily sung with devotion in temples and homes throughout the Tamil land. A common Tamil saying is that "He who is not melted by the *Tiru-Vāchakam* must have a stone for a heart."

Mānikka-Vāchakar bases his *bhakti* on the following articles: (1) God is sovereign; the Lord of creation; the ruler of the universe; and indwells all creatures out of love for men, and (2) his love is perfect and unfailing.[55] This conception of God is undoubtedly the Ṣūfīstic One God (Allāh) who is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, and not the God of Yoga who is a mere conception for one-pointed meditation. Like the Ṣūfīs, Mānikka-Vāchakar also holds that God's light fills the heaven and the earth, and the whole creation is bright with His light (1.23). This has obvious reference to the Qur'ān (24.35). In one of his poems, Mānikka depicts his love-tie with God who lives in his (Mānikka's) heart all the time :

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53. Quoted by Dhavamony, p. 152; also see *Hinduism*, p. 131.
54. Cf. RLI, 197; also see Dhavamony, p. 158.
55. See *ibid.*

[God] does not quit my heart even for an instant: [he is] the king who soothed my soul's unrest, and made me his . . .

[He] is far removed from those who are without [love]. . . [he] is pleased with those who worship him with adoring hands . . .[He is] the glorious One who uplifts those who bow their head [to him]. . . .Praise be to the feet of the stainless, who stands near in love (1.2-13).[56]

In the above poems of Mānikka-Vāchakar we see some similarities with Ṣūfī ideals. Apart from a strong sense of monotheism, and the mystic conception that God dwells in the devotee's or believer's heart, as we have seen in Rūmī's saying, Mānikka-Vāchakar alludes to the Qur'ānic conception ef absolute submission (*aslamā*) to God,[57] and God's nearness to man (Q.50.15; 2.182). Of course, these ideas are not wanting in the *Gītā*, as we have noticed. But the fact still remains that they did not receive a popular currency in the form of a religion of the masses as they did in this *bhakti* movement which arose after the meeting of Hindu and Muslim mysticism.

It may be noted here that although in Mānikka-Vāchakar's poems *bhakti* is proposed as a free gift of God bestowed on devotees(cf. 4.2; 51.4), he constantly prays to God to grant him His grace (see 5.6, 11,12). This is interpreted as Mānikka-Vāchakar not being intent to make *bhakti* work automatically irrespective of man's longing for it. "It is abundantly clear", says Dhavamony, "from the texts that he is far from proposing a doctrine of self-surrender (*prapatti*) according to which God does everything and man nothing."[58] The doctrine of absolute self-surrender to God's grace (*prasāda*) on the part of the devotee without the obligation of performing any religious duty was held by the Teṇkalai or southern branch of Rāmānuja's school to which Kabīr belongs. In this respect Mānikka-Vāchakar takes a different position from Kabīr.

Finally, like Appar, Mānikka-Vāchakar was conscious of his burden of guilt in life and this is very often expressed in his poems. He says :

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56. Cited in *ibid.*, pp. 159-60.
57. See T. W. Arnold, "Islām", SEI, pp. 176-78.
58. *Op. cit.*, p. 162.

Whether I praise or curse thee still I am
stained with sin and sorrowing,
Yet, wilt thou leave me? Splendour shining
like the red-hued coral mount,
Master, thou drankest poison black, the
humbler beings pitying,
That I, thy meanest one, might find no poison,
but a nectar fount.[59]

We can see the religious experience reflected in such poems. There is a relationship of "intimacy, a confidence, a directness of approach": a feeling that God is deeply concerned with the smallest aspect of human life, "a feeling that nothing can take man from the divine presence", comments Berry.[60]

The Śaivite mystic-poets sang the songs of their hearts' feeling — the feeling of love and devotion for their Lord Śiva. In this they were neither afraid nor ashamed of what they were saying in their *bhakti* rapture. To the bystanders who have not tasted the same divine experience, these *bhaktas* might have appeared as madmen. But the very madness of the *bhakta* was his pride.

At any rate, the type of spiritual awakening they created among the masses who had little interest in cold philosophical speculations was unprecedented in the whole religious history of India. Some writers are willing to weigh its value even in terms of the world. "No cult in the world", thus says L.D. Barnett in reference to this Śaiva *bhakti*, "has produced a richer devotional literature or one more instinct with brilliance of imagination, fervour of feeling and grace of expression."[61]

In the tenth century a great Śaivite mystic-scholar-theologian, named, Nambi-andar-nambi, who was a contemporary of Vaiṣṇava Nāthamuni (of whom we shall speak later), and the Rājarāja the Great, the Chola King (985-1018), collected the Tamil hymns of The Three, into one collection, named it the *Tevāram* i.e. *Devāram* (the Divine Garland), and with the help of Rājarāja had them set to Dravidian music. They were sung in the shrines. " They gave the worship a fresh interest and

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59. Quoted in Kingsbury and Phillips, p. 101.
60. *Op. cit.*, p. 51.
61. Quoted in LRI, 80.

splendour," remarks Farquhar, "without disturbing the ancient Sanskrit liturgy."[62]

The doctrinal system with which the Tamil Śaivite devotional religion (*bhakti*) is associated is called the *Śaiva Siddhānta* (Reasoned Śaiva System), prepared during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by a school of Tamil thinker-poets of whom Meykaṇḍa Deva (the seer of truth: thirteenth century) was the master mind, a Śūdra by birth.[63] Although the philosophy of *Śaiva-Siddhānta* is based on the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* as well as on the writings of the Tamil saints, "it was the influence of the latter", comments Zaehner, "that made the writers of the *Śaiva-Siddhānta* attach such enormous importance to the doctrine of grace freely given and the impossibility of spiritual progress without love."[64]

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62. RLI, 256. An inscription of Rājarāja shows that he introduced them into his magnificent temple at Tanjore, sung by a special choir, quite distinct from the priestly ministrants. Nambi's name is also associated with the formulation of a large body of Tamil scripture, which is called the *Tirumurai* (the Sacred Books).

Nambi collected most of the Śaiva hymns then in existence and grouped them in eleven books; and the collection was completed by the addition of a twelfth in the twelfth century. The contents are : (a) *The Tevāram*, (b) *The Tiruvāchakam*, (c) the *Tiru Isaipa*, (d) the *Tirumantram*, (e) Miscellaneous Poems, including Nambi's own works, (f) the *Periya Purāṇam*, or Great Legend, a Liberal Sanctorum, forming the Twelfth Book.

Pattinattu Piḷḷai (probably tenth century) is the author of some beautiful devotional verses, which, along with the work of several minor authors, found a place in the sacred cannon. There are also a large number of poems highly monotheistic and purāṇic character of a later date, though erroneously attributed to Piḷḷai (see RLI, 256).

63. Meykaṇḍa lived on the bank of the Pennar river to the North of Madras. He also translated twelve Sanskrit Sūtras from the *Raurava Āgama* into Tamil verses. To this work, which is known as Śiva-Jñāna-Bodha (Instruction in Knowledge of Śiva), he added a few notes in Tamil prose, and a series of logical analogies also in prose in support of his reasoning (see RLI, 257). One of his disciples, named, Manavāchakam Kaḍandān wrote *Unmai Vilakham*, a treatise in fifty-four stanzas consisting of questions and answers on the main points of Siddhānta teaching. Another disciple, named Aruḷanandi wrote the *Śiva-Jñāna-Siddhi*, a famous work in two parts, of which the first is a criticism of other Indian schools of thought, including Buddhism and Jainism, while the second is a full statement of *Śaiva Siddhānta* teaching (see *ibid.*).

64. *Hinduism*, pp. 130-31. For further information on *Śiva-Siddhānta*, see Bālasubrāmaniam, K. M., SLŚS.

It may be noted here that there are indications that whatever influence Ṣūfīsm may have exerted on these Tamil Śaivite saints, and no matter how strong has been the sense of monotheism in their teachings, a complete departure from the old Hindu tradition has not yet been effected. Their use of the Vedic literature, the *Epics* and the *Purāṇas* are examples in point. Hence the relation between the Vedas, the Āgamas and the contributions of the different Śaivite saints has been thus expressed by an anonymous author: "The Veda is the Cow. The true Āgamas are its milk. The Tamil hymns of the four great Śaiva *ācāryas*[65] are the butter in the milk, and the taste of that butter is the *Śaiva-jñāna-bodhan* of Meykaṇḍar...."[66] "The Śaiva *bhaktas* also practised temple and image worship. However, a clear break with the Hindu tradition is found in the system of Basava called Vīra-Śaiva (stalwart Śaivas) or Liṅgāyatas (Liṅga-wearers). Let us now turn to this school.

THE LIṄGĀYATA SYSTEM

The exalted songs to Śiva initiated in the Tamil land, as we have noticed, spread shortly afterward to the region of Kannaḍa, where they were taken up by Basava in the twelfth century.[67]

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65. They are : Tirunāvukkarasu (Appar), Nānasambandhar, Sundaramūrti and Māṇikka-Vāchakar who respectively represent the four main paths of Śaivism, viz., the paths of *caryā*, *kriyā*, *yoga* and *jñāna*, otherwise known as the *Dāsa-mārga*, *Satputra-mārga*, *Saha-mārga* and *Sat-mārga*, i.e. the path of the servant, the path of the good son, the path of the friend, and the good (or true) path.

66. Quoted in CHIB, IV, 346-47.

67. Bhandarkar thinks it came into existence about a century earlier (see, *op. cit.*, p. 134). The Liṅgāyatas themselves also believe that the sect is extremely old, and that it was only reorganised in the twelfth century. But Farquhar suggests that although most of the elements united in the sect are old, the sect itself came into being in the middle of the twelfth century (cf. RLI, 259).

Scholars have usually held that the founder of the sect was Basava, but J. F. Fleet believes that Ekāntada Rāmāyya of Ablur whose career is mentioned in an early inscription, was the real leader, and that Basava came in as a political and military auxiliary. The tradition is that the sect was founded by five ascetics—Ekorama, Paṇḍitārādhya, Rāvaṇa, Marula, Viśvārādhya—

In the Karṇāṭak for centuries, there were both Śaivas and Jains : the new sect seems to have been essentially a fresh formation meant to give Śaivas a more definite theology and a new organization, and to win over the Jains to the worship of Śiva. The sect gained considerable proportions when Basava became the prime minister of Bijjala, the Kalachuri, who became king at Kalyan (near modern Bombay) in 1156. Basava denounced both caste and image-worship (cf. v. 17).[68] "As time went on," observes Zaehner, "they developed extreme puritanical and anti-Brāhmanic tendencies. They rejected the authority of the Vedas and, for the first time since early Vedic times, the doctrine of transmigration; they objected to child marriages and did not prevent the marriage of widows."[69]

The doctrines of the Vīra-Śaivas are extremely interesting and important for our study, for they are in many respects similar to those of Kabīr, though there are also disimilarities. It is also interesting to note that in its rejection of the age-old Hindu doctrine of *saṁsāra*, the very fundamental bondage of life, according to Hinduism, from which it seeks *mokṣa* — the ultimate religious quest of Hinduism — and its denunciation of child-marriage and its allowing of widow remarriage, the Liṅgāyata system stands in line with the nineteenth-century puritanical Brāhmo Samāj of Rām Mohan Roy (1772-1833), on whom the influence of Islām is universally acknowledged.[70] The one great difference between Basava and Kabīr is that while the former rejects the doctrine of metempsychosis, the latter accepts it as we shall see in the following chapter. We propose to examine Basava's system at some length, for it has

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who are held to have sprung from the five heads of Śiva, incarnate age after age. These are believed to be very ancient and Basava is said to have been the reviver of the faith. Yet the early literature shows that the five were all his contemporaries (cf. RLI, 260.also see J. F. Fleet, "Epigraphic Researches in Mysore", *JRAS*, XXXVII (1905), 289-312).

68. Cf. RLI, 261. For Basava's life, see Deveerappa, H. (ed.), *Vacanas of Basavanna*, tr. L. M. A. Menzes, Mysore State, 1967, pp. 15-16.

69. *Hinduism*, p. 134; also see Rev. J. Stevenson, "On the Ante-Brāhmanical Worship/Religion of the Hindūs in the Dekhan", *JRAS*, V (1839), 189-97, 264-67; VI (1841), 239-41; VIII (1846), 330-39.

70. See Farquhar, J. N., MRMI, 15 ff.

great similarities with Islām on the one hand, and Kabīr, on the other.

Although Farquhar is inclined to hold that the two features of the Liṅgāyata, namely, the prominence of the monasteries and the large measure of religious and social equality, are probably in part imitations of Jainism,[71] still there are many writers who think that the sect as a whole is an outcome of the influence of Islām. Farquhar ignores the fact that equality of man and monastic (*khanqa'*) life are also distinguishing features of Ṣūfīsm, albeit the latter is considered to be the result of Buddhist influence in Ṣūfīsm as Goldziher has suggested.

In his introduction to Deveerappa's *Vacanas of Basavaṇṇa*, Śrī Shivakumāra Shivāchārya describes Basava thus : "The illuminating chapters in the history of man's progress and development are really those that tell of the mighty souls who lead the race from darkness to light, from misery to happiness, from ugliness to beauty, and above all, from death to deathlessness. Basavaṇṇa of Kalyan is one such mighty soul."[72]

It is said that when Basava was still a young boy he developed an aversion for the Brāhmanical rites which involve the sacrifice of animals. Then the division of the society into several classes on the basis of birth did not convince him. He was unhappy that religious rites could not be performed by everybody in the society. A great social and religious *bhakta*-reformer as he was, Basava set to work with strong determination and religious zeal to eradicate the socio-religious inequality in the then Hindu society. He preached that all men are equal and thus brothers ; "bad conduct is low caste, good conduct is high caste and religion is the birthright of every body."[73]

Commenting on the doctrine of Basava, one writer says : "These doctrines of liberty, equality and brotherhood were quite new to the common man of the land. It was a great boon to them, particularly women who were thrown to the dark corner. This is the first [Indian] prophet, perhaps, to extol the

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71. Cf. RLI, 259-60.

72. *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

73. *Ibid.*, p. 16. He laid down seven rules of conduct (v. 235); they are reminiscent of Islāmic code of conduct.

dignity of human labour, since he advocated the equality of all professions."[74]

These sayings of Basava are reminiscent of the Islāmic ideology of equality and brotherhood. As is well known, in the Islamic system there cannot be any distinction between man and man due to the accident of birth; the distinction is determined on the strength of *taqwa* (piety, virtues) and *akhlāq* (conduct). The Qur'ānic teaching on this point is found at Ch. 2.177. In Muḥammad's teaching is also found the dignity of human labour. As a corollary to this principle, he disapproved of the institution of slavery. At any rate, the influence of Islām on Basava seems to be more vivid than on any other *bhakta* that preceded him in the Tamil land.

In keeping with his ideology of equality of all, Basava welcomed to his sect men and women of every walk of life who became his disciples. But his disciples were in no way inferior to him; because he is reported to have said : "No one is smaller than myself." Then what was his position, it may be asked ? "Basava was the great luminary in the centre," answers Śri Shivakumāra, "absorbing the light and energy from others and ejecting the same in some other form in return."[75]

Basava is said to have written hundreds of *Vacanas* (hymns) in Kanarese. They are of high literary and philosophical value. The subject-matter of these *vacanas* is mainly the religious experiences of Basava. His longings for spiritual perfection, his zeal for religious and social reform, admiration and love of the Śaiva saints who had preceded him, and, finally, his dialogues with Kudala-Saṅgama (God) to whom he directs his love and devotion. Apart from these, his humility, straightforwardness, boldness in attacking what is wrong in the eyes of justice, his sincerity, love of humanity — all these characteristics also reveal themselves in the *vacanas*.

Basava's idea of religion is expressed in many *vacanas*: "What sort of religion can it be without passion ?.... Compassion is the very root of all religions."[76]

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74. *Ibid.*

75. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

76. *Ibid.* One of Basava's disciples is Allamā Prabhū. The term "Allamā" seems to be very interesting in our context. It is an Islāmic

His objection to sacrifice is articulated in the following passage which he addressed to a goat to be slaughtered :

Cry, cry, O goat
That you are slain
In accordance with the Vedas !
Cry, cry, before them
That read the Vedas
Cry, cry, before them
That listen to the Śāstras !
Lord Kudala Saṅgama
Will take a fit toll
For what you have wept ![77]

Basava expresses his contempt of the Vedas and the Śāstras as follows: "I will gird myself with arms to fight the Vedas ; I will put fetters on the Śāstras; I will raise welts on Logic's back — Look you, I will chop off the Āgama's nose !"[78]

Basava argues that the soul can never progress without undivided full faith in one God. Inconsistency leads nowhere:

If you meet Bhaktas, you
Shave off your head ;
If you meet Savanās, you
Strip yourself bare ;
If you meet Brāhmins, you
Intone their Harī's name ;
Whoever you meet,
So you become !
I hate to see
Such hartol brood.
What shall I say of
The idiots who claim
To be devotees—
Who worship Lord Kudala Saṅgama
But bow to other gods?[79]

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term, means highly learned: from '*ālim* (sg.), '*ulamā*' (pl.) : the learned ones. '*Allamā* is used in superlative degree, e.g. the poet-philosopher Dr. Muḥammad Iqbāl is usually mentioned in Hindustānī language as 'Allamā Muḥammad Iqbāl. Although we do not know what this term means in Kanarese, yet the influence of Islām has been suggested in adopting such a name.

77. V. 527 cited in Deveerappa, p. 20.
78. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 21.
79. V 103 cited in *ibid.*, p. 24.

In another place Basava is quoted to have said :
May I say Viṣṇu is great ? He suffered much in his ten Avatāras. Is Brahmā great ? He lost his head. But is the Veda superior. It cannot realise the Liṅga though it is praised variously. May I hold the Śāstra to be best ? But it is verbose. Is the Purāṇa ultimate ? It deals with karma in previous births. If I regard Āgama as the be-all and end-all, it has gone with the wind. Therefore, God Kudala Saṅgama alone is real. The rest are false.[80]

Basava expresses the joy of his union with the Lord in the following *vacana* :

The outer and inner now are one —
Soul married unto soul ! Thou art, O Lord,
Beyond Nāda, Bindu, Kalā; Thou art
The ground and origin !
Lord Kudala Saṅga alone the joy
Of union at the Height (v. 958).

When Basava denounced idolatry, he also denounced the priests who are responsible for leading people to idol-worship, and thus the guardians of all superstition in the society (cf. vs. 556-58). Criticising the custom of offering food to fire, Basava says that fire does not need food; it is needed to preserve human life (see v. 591). Continuing his criticism of fire-worship, Basava says that people think that fire is God and offer food to it. But when their houses catch fire, they are not elated that the God of fire has come to their houses; instead of prostrating to it, they throw all sorts of filthy stuff on it and shout and call others (cf. v. 584).

Basava denounced the efficacy of bathing in holy waters. He says that people take long journeys to go to bathe in a river like the Ganges with the hope of getting rid of their sins. They worship and go round the tree with the object of getting children. Water dries up. The tree withers. They cannot retain their very existence. How can they remove the sins of the worshippers or bless them with children (v. 579).

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80. Hunashal, S. M., *The Liṅgāyat Movement : A Social Revolution in Karnataka*, Dharwar, 1941, p. 43.

Basava also directed his criticism against temple worship. According to him, there is no sense in imprisoning God and religion in *mutts* and temples. They must be released from there and be established in the heart of man which is the abode of the individual soul; and the individual body is his temple. This theme has been made clear in the following *vacana* :

The rich build temples,
But poor as I am,
What can I do ?
This, my body, is my temple —
My legs are its pillars,
My body is the sanctum
My head is verily the golden pinnacle — the Kalaśa
O hear ! Lord Kudala Saṅgama
Matter is perishable,
But not the spirit (v. 820).

The Vīra-Śaivas worship Śiva as the only supreme God. The modes of their worship of Śiva are two: each Vīra-Śaiva worships his own *Jaṅgama guru*; and he worships the small liṅga, the emblem of Śiva, which he wears in a reliquary hung round his neck (whence the name Liṅgāyata). The Liṅgāyatas worship privately twice a day before meals. There is a prescribed form of meditation and adoration. Meditation is done in accordance with the six *sthalas*.[81]

We have surveyed the system of Basava in some detail, though our survey is by no means complete. Without going into further details, it may be asserted that by his repudiation of old Hindu tradition, customs, practices and literature, Basava has made a clear departure from that tradition. Hence Max Weber says, "The denial of Vedic ritual by Basava resulted in breaking loose from the Brāhmans and splitting the caste order."[82] In doctrine it was strictly "monotheistic", recognizing only Śiva — the Lord Kudala Saṅgama — who alone deserves devotional

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81. Cf. RLI, 261. The six *sthalas* are the six stages of spiritual progress, through which the Liṅgāyat passes in seeking union with Śiva : (a) *bhakti*, (b) *maheśa*, (c) *prasāda*, (d) *prāṇaliṅga*, (e) *śaraṇa*, and (f) *aikya*.

82. *Op. cit.*, p. 304.

worship from the Vīra-Śaivas, and denying the "Brāhmanical-Hinduistic pantheon and the trinity of the highest gods."[83] Whatever worship Basava has introduced into his system, such as Śiva worship and that of his liṅga, they do not seem to have been based on any Brāhmanic-Hindu religious literature.

This radical change in Basava's attitude to a tradition and a society of which he was a product is seen as due mainly to some external influence. Bhandarkar finds the influence of Rāmānuja in the philosophy of Liṅgāyata.[84] Farquhar seems to be willing to agree with Bhandarkar.[85] That may be so, but some scholars have conjectured the influence of Islām on Rāmānuja too. Some have suggested that Basava's ideas were inspired by Christianity.[86] This view has been rejected by Tara Chand[87] and A. Barth : the latter asserts, "But perhaps they are more imbued with Ṣūfīsm than with Christian ideas." "It is not in general the monotheism of the Christian religion which most strikes a Hindu;" continues Barth, "and these hymns profess a rigid monotheism, which reminds us rather of the Korān than of the somewhat modified religious beliefs of the Christians of St. Thomas."[88]

It may be recalled here again that the whole of south and south-western India from Cambay to Quilon was studded with Muslim settlements, as we have noticed before. We have also noticed how intense their missionary activity was. In contrast to this, the Christians and their missionary work in those areas during the period of our study were insignificant. It is against this background, that Tara Chand asserts :

> It is difficult to resist the inference that Liṅgāyatism was a result of the influence which these Muslims exerted in those parts of India. No other hypothesis appears sufficient to explain the revolutionary character of its doctrines and customs. The abandonment of such a deep-rooted Hindu idea

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83. *Ibid.*, p. 305; also see Barth, pp. 209-10.
84. Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 134.
85. See RLI, 264.
86. Cf. Caldwell, R., CGDL, 210.
87. *Op. cit.*, p. 119.
88. *Op. cit.*, p. 210; also see A.S.R. Ayyar (Aiyar), "The Martyrdom of St. Thomas, the Apostle", *JASB*, N. S., XXI (1952), 507-48.

as that of metempsychosis and of such customs as cremation and purificatory death ceremonial, the abolition of inequalities of caste and sex and the reform of marriage . . . the conception of their sanctified preceptor, and of God (Allama) whose very name is probably of Muslim origin point unmistakably to the source of inspiration, that is, Islām.[89]

An Indian writer has made a comparative study of Liṅgāyatism and Islām, and has come to the conclusion that the consistent monotheism of the former is nothing but an example of the rigorous monotheism of the latter. He further contends that the cry of Islām — one God, one humanity and its social toleration —"was enthusiastically hailed by the distressed multitudes searching for the secure anchor of a simple faith in the stormy sea of social disintegration, intellectual bankruptcy and spritiual chaos.[90]" Making further comparison, the same writer says : "Like Islām, Liṅgāyatism rose under the polytheistic firmament of Brāhmanic Hinduism .... Basava's mission as that of Muḥammad was to coordinate and unify the disintegrating and degenerating forces of humanity purging them of their pestilence."[91] Islām and Liṅgāyatism are also seen as equal not only from the religious point of view, but also social, economic and political points of view. Hence the above writer concludes, "There are no two opinions regarding the social, economic and political aspects of both Islām and Liṅgāyatism. Basava, like Muḥammad, had a message to give, of liberty, equality and fraternity of humanity. Indeed the Liṅgāyata movement was a revolt against the *Varṇāśrama-dharma*."[92]

All these arguments in favour of finding the influence of Islām on Basava would appear to have a degree of probability as far as Basava's apparent intention to introduce in his system a pure monotheism, like Islām, is concerned. But in the final analysis it would appear that Basava fell just short of the absolute monotheism of Islām by the very fact that he allowed the worship of the liṅga — a symbol — which Islām does not brook.

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89. *Op. cit.*, pp. 119-20.
90. Hunashal, pp. 186-87.
91. *Ibid.*, pp. 192-93.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 194.

Finally, before Kabīr, aside from Nāmdeva, Basava's system bears the clearest indications of the influence of the Ṣūfīs. Then, the points of difference between them are not too difficult to find. Firstly, in their rejection of Hinduism, the two *bhaktas* are equal with this exception that Kabīr retained some Hindu ideas, such as *Karma*, *saṁsāra*, etc. Secondly, Kabīr did not found any sect. Kabīr's mission was different from Basava's. He was not only a *bhakta*, he was also a genuine reformer. In this respect, he undertook the task of breaking down all sectarian differences that had existed between Hinduism and Islām which kept them separated for centuries, and make a united religion acceptable to both the communities. Thirdly, in Basava's system, *bhakti* was accompanied by some prescribed worship and ritual, whereas Kabīr having accepted the doctrine of *prapatti*, advocated complete self-surrender with *bhakti* to the grace of God which excludes the need of performing any religious rites. Finally, Basava has not said anything against Islām,[93] whereas Kabīr rejected Islām as he did Hinduism. In this respect Kabīr is regarded as an eclectic. Notwithstanding his repudiation of some of the fundamentals of Islām, such as ritual prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, etc., Kabīr, unlike any other *bhakta*, retained the purest form of Islāmic monotheism and egalitarianism. It may be emphasised here that for his particular mission of synthesising Hinduism and Islām, Kabīr stands unique among all Ṣūfīs as well as all *bhaktas*.

THE SIDDHARS

Like the Vīra-Śaivas, there were the Siddhars in the Tamil land. The Siddhars were followers of the path of devotion and love. Patirakiriyar was the most outstanding teacher of the Siddhars. Like the Ṣūfīs, he identified God with love. In accordance with his principle of strict monotheism, Patirakiriyar rejected all kinds of image and idol worship.

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93. Basava's silence about Islām may be explained in two ways : (1) he did not know Islām well enough to be critical about it, or (2) he was too willing to accept the ideas of a new faith uncritically. We have no evidence to accept or reject either hypothesis.

Thus he is quoted to have said :

True worship does not consist in bowing
To idols made of clay, or mud
Baked in fire. No image made
Of stone or wood, no *liṅga* stump,
Built of earth and made by hand,
Could ever seem divine to one
Who knew he came from God.[94]

The Siddhars did not believe in caste distinctions. Thus Patirakiriyar asks the Brāhmans :

O Brāhmans, listen to me
And answer if you can.
Do rain and wind avoid
Some men among the rest
Because their caste is low ?
When such men tread the earth
Hast seen it quake with rage ?
Or does the brilliant sun
Refuse to them its rays ?[95]

Patirakiriyar is reported to have deeply yearned for the coming of the brotherhood of man :

When shall our race be one great brotherhood
Unbroken by the tyranny of caste ?[96]

He further asks :

O Brāhmans list to me !
In all this blessed land
There is but one great caste,
One tribe and brotherhood.
One God doth dwell above
And He hath made us one
In birth and frame and tongue.[97]

From these quotations it would appear that the Siddhars were probably influenced by the Ṣūfīs. "The hymns of the Siddhars", contends Tara Chand, "remind one of the uncompromising severity of Islām. Their conceptions of God and

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94. Gover, C. E., FSSI, 162 cited by Tara Chand, p. 126.
95. R. C. Caldwell, IA, I (1872), 68 quoted by Tara Chand, p. 127.
96. "Tamil Popular Poetry", p. 102 cited by Tara Chand, p. 127.
97. "Tamil Popular Poetry", p. 168 quoted by Tara Chand, p. 128.

absorption in Him are reminiscent of the teachings of the Ṣūfīs, for both describe the ultimate reality as light and both give to Love a dominating position among universal forces[98]". But for some reason, it appears, the Siddhars did not become as popular as the Vīra-Śaivas.

The Śaivas and the Siddhars did not have the field of *bhakti* alone in south India, for we find that parallel to the Śaiva *bhaktas*, the Vaiṣṇava *bhaktas*, who are called the Āḷvārs (men who have intuitive knowledge of God) also developed their *bhakti* cult directed to Viṣṇu and his human incarnations, such as Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. There were twelve Āḷvārs of whom we will discuss here only the most important one.

THE VAIṢṆAVITES OF THE SOUTH

The Āḷvārs are said to have sprung from a section of the Dravidian population which had remained hitherto unaffected by the pantheism of the Upaniṣads.[99] Farquhar contends that in their poems the influence of the Epics and early Purāṇas is discernible.[100] The Āḷvārs have been regarded as the teachers of the Śrī-Vaiṣṇava sect.

The poems of Āḷvārs with which they are said to have sung Buddhism and Jainism out of the Tamil lands, are full of devotion (*bhakti*). They developed a strong sense of monotheism by directing their (*bhakti*) to one God (Viṣṇu). Their chief joy was to look continuously into the eyes of a favourite image and to pour out their praises in music and song. Sometimes the *bhakta*, being overpowered by his feeling and emotion, would fall unconscious in mystic ecstasy before the image in a temple.

The Āḷvārs taught the people from every walk of life without making any distinction between male and female, high and low ; and some of the Āḷvārs are said to have been outcastes.[101].

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98. *Ibid.*
99. See *Hinduism*, p. 128.
100. RLI, 187.
101. For the list of the twelve Āḷvārs, see *ibid.*, p. 188.

Among the Āḷvārs, Nammāḷvār was the outstanding figure (eighth century).[102] He left a systematic account of their beliefs in Tamil. With reference to Nammāḷvār, A. Govindacharya says :

> Briefly, Saint Nam Āḷvār declares that when one is overcome by bhakti exaltation, trembling in every cell of his being, he must freely and passively allow this influence to penetrate his being, and carry him beyond all known states of consciousness; never from fear or shame that bystanders may take him for a madman, ought the exhibition of this bhakti-rapture that deluges his being, to be suppressed. The very madness is the means of distinguishing him from the ordinary mortals to whom such beatific vision is necessarily denied. The very madness is bhakta's pride. In that very madness, the saint exhorts, 'run, jump, cry, laugh and sing, and let every man witness it.'[103]

This was the type of *bhakti*-madness that Nammāḷvār experienced. To him, loveless technique which the yoga teaches has no meaning; and man's highest goal is not *mokṣa per se*, but to realise his unity with God in love. Describing his insatiable love of God, Nammāḷvār says :

> As I dote on the Lord of Kalkarai (God)
> Whose streets with scarlet lily are perfumed
> My heart for his wonderful graces melts
> How then can I, my restless love suppress ?[104]

In another place Nammāḷvār says :

> My Lord of the Celestials !
> Thou hast made my heart Thy tabernacle.
> So intimate and close is Thy union with me
> That I beseech Thee never more to leave me,—
> Me so lovingly clinging to Thee.[105]

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102. The dates of the Āḷvārs are given differently (cf. *ibid.*, ns. 1 and 2, p. 188); also see HM, 149.

103. *Divine Wisdom of the Dravidian Saints*, Madras, 1902, p. 103 quoted in HM, 150.

104. *Ibid.*

105. Quoted by Tara Chand, pp. 93-94.

Another aspect of Āḷvār's *bhakti* to God is their expression of a relation as between husband and wife. Let us illustrate with Nammāḷvār's saying :

Thou hast not yet been gracious enough to extend
Thy sympathy towards Thy consort (Āḷvār).
Before she gives up her ghost in despair owing to Thy indifference,
Show so much at least of Thy mercy as to send word to Thy consort
Through Thy messenger and vehicle *Garuḍa* the storehouse of kindness,
Not to pine away, but to take courage a little, till Thou, Lord and Master returnest as expected,
Which will assuredly take place soon.[106]

The above passage illustrates what may be called Nammāḷvār's love affair with the Divine in which he sees himself as a newly wedded virgin who has not yet been touched by her husband. In her longing to receive her husband, she grows impatient and feels disappointed. Commenting on Nammāḷvār's love affair, Dasgupta says : "...how, through cessation of all inclination to other things and the increase of longing for God *in a timeless and spaceless manner*, and through the pangs of separation in not realizing him constantly, he considers himself as a woman, and through the pangs of love loses his consciousness."[107]

This is a cry hitherto unknown in the Hindu tradition. In the *Gītā* we have seen the aspect of divine love; but it did not acquire there that dimension and intensity which it had in the case of Nammāḷvār. In its magnitude, the mysticism of the Āḷvārs is considered totally different from that of yoga and the Vedānta.[108]

Another aspect of the Āḷvār-*bhakti* is the intimate relationship in which the *bhakta* talks to God. The *bhakta* talks to his beloved God in extreme frankness and confidence; God is not conceived as the powerful Potentate of the world, but a lover

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106. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 94.
107. Quoted in *Hinduism*, p. 128.
108. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 129.

and beloved with whom the *bhakta* converses freely without any fear to being unheard and unattended.

This novelty in the *bhakti* mysticism of the Āḷvārs is seen as a result of Muslim missionary influence which had been there since the seventh century of the Christian era. However, in the absence of specific evidence to show any direct influence of Islām, particularly of the Ṣūfīs, on the Āḷvārs, the possibility of Islamic influence may be regarded as a valuable hypothesis. Nevertheless, it is very significant to notice the incidence of similar ideas between them. It needs further study to unearth specific evidence of their mutual influence.

It may be mentioned here that there were two kinds of *bhaktas* among the Vaiṣṇavas, viz., the Āḷvārs of whom we have just reported, and Ācāryas, of whom Nāthamuni (end of the tenth and beginning of the eleventh century) was the first. He gathered the hymns of the Āḷvārs and arranged them in four groups (thousand stanzas in each group), collectively called *Nālāyira Prabandham* (Book of Four Thousand Hymns). Nāthamuni also set these hymns to Dravidian music and arranged for the regular singing of them in the great temple of Śrīraṅgam at Tiruchirapalli. The introduction of the singing of these devotional lyrics into the temple service was of immense significance, for "the use of Tamil in the worship", says Farquhar, "brought the cult nearer the people; and the rich and passionate devotion of the hymns made the bhakti of the sect more vivid and real."[109] As a result the practice eventually spread to all other shrines. This *Prabandham* is called the Tamil Vaiṣṇava Veda and honoured as high as the Vedas.[110]

The Ācāryas were both great theologians and philosophers. Nāthamuni's grandson was Yāmunācārya or Yāmunāmuni, a competent scholar and a sanyāsi.[111] Rāmānuja succeeded him at Śrīraṅgam.

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109. RLI, 240.

110. Cf. Bhandarkar, p. 50.

111. Under Nāthamuni a school of combined Sanskrit and Tamil scholarship arose at Śrīraṅgam, whence he is called the first Ācārya of the sect. The study of the *Prabandham* was one of the chief parts of the curri-

Before entering into a discussion on Rāmānuja, it is necessary to have a glance at the points of difference and agreement between the Āḷvārs and Kabīr. Although the Āḷvārs professed a highly developed monotheistic system, and established equality at least in the realm of religion, and made *bhakti* cult a religion of the masses by employing the native language for singing their devotional hymns, still they clung to the old Hindu tradition; in that they practised temple and image worships; accepted the doctrine of the incarnation of God; and used Hindu religious literature, such as the Vedas, the Epics and the Purāṇas. Kabīr, on the other hand, repudiated all these elements of Hinduism, and unlike the Āḷvārs accepted the equality of all for all purposes — religious as well as social — and practised a monotheism purer than that of the Āḷvārs, and of all other *bhaktas*. For this reason Kabīr is universally recognised as the best representative of Islamic monotheism among the *bhaktas*. It may be mentioned again that Kabīr had a different mission to perform — uniting of the Hindus and the Muslims on a single platform — religious as well as social. And in this sense, he is also lauded as the best representative of Hindu-Muslim unity. Hence, by necessity, he had to be above the sectarian level.

RĀMĀNUJA'S BHAKTI

Turning back to Rāmānuja (1016/17-1137), we are told that the Āḷvārs paved the way for his rise in the same way as Mānikka-Vāchakar did for Basava. That may be, but the two persons are poles apart as far as their attitude to *bhakti* and the Hindu tradition. Having already seen Basava, let us now study Rāmānuja in some detail. Rāmānuja occupies the most important position in the *bhakti* cult for being the first person to give a philosophical basis to this cult.

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culum, and a series of commentaries was written on them. Yāmunācārya's chief books are the *Siddhitraya*, which seeks to establish the reality of the human soul; the *Āgamaprāmāṇya*, on the authority of the Vaiṣṇava *Āgamas*; and the *Gītārtha-saṅgraha*, an exposition of the *Bhagavadgītā*, all in Sanskrit. In these works is found the earliest statement of the *Viśiṣṭādvaita* philosophy, of which Rāmānuja is the classical exponent (see RLI, 241).

Rāmānuja received his early philosophical training from Yādava Prakāśa, who belonged to the Advaita Vedānta school of Śaṅkara. But he seems to have grown dissatisfied with that system and, having left his teacher, he adhered to Śrīraṅgam where he drank deep from the nectar of the Āḷvār's *Prabandham*. He was still a young boy when he succeeded Yāmunācārya, one of whose last directions, Bhandarkar tells us, to his successor was to compose a commentary of *Brahmasūtras*. The necessity for such a work was felt by the Vaiṣṇavas, according to Bhandarkar, since they found it impossible to maintain the doctrine of *bhakti* in the face of the Advaita Vedānta (monism of spirit) of Śaṅkara as based on the *Vedānta-Sūtras* (*Brahmasūtras*) and the Upaniṣads.[112] Commenting on Śaṅkara's monism and his doctrine of Māyā (the world only an illusion and thus unreal), Bhandarkar says that this doctrine left no room for the exercise of love and piety in the world of reality. In fact, "it laid the axe at the root of Vaiṣṇavism."[113]

Rāmānuja is said to have been most successful as a teacher and disputant. For about twenty years he lectured, held discussions and wrote books.[114]

It appears clear that Rāmānuja undertook the task of refuting Śaṅkara's illusory monism, which he did with enormous skill and thoroughness. The system Rāmānuja established is called *Viśiṣṭādvaita* (qualified monism). According to this system, which provides scope for the feeling of *bhakti* or love for God, and the spirit of worship, there are three eternal principles, viz., the individual or animal soul (*Cit*), the insensate world (*Acit*) and the Supreme Soul (*Īśvara*) (cf. *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad*, 1.12). In other words, Rāmānuja's qualified monism enunciates that the individual soul and the insensate world are the attributes of the Supreme Soul

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112. Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 51.

113. *Ibid.*

114. Of his books, the following three are of special philosophical importance : (1) the *Vedārtha-saṅgraha*, which seeks to show that the Upaniṣads do not teach an absolute monism, (2) the *Śrībhaṣya*, a commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras*, and (3) the *Gītā-bhāṣya*, a commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*.

(Brahman, Īśvara). What are necessary for the efficacy of the method of *bhakti*, are *Karmayoga* and *Jñānayoga* : the former leads to the latter; and the latter leads to *bhakti*; and when *bhakti* reaches its consummation, it assumes the form of actually seeing (God) and produces the final mental perception.[115]

The first thing we notice in Rāmānuja's system is that *bhakti* has not been given an exclusive weight; it is rather interrelated with the two other parts of *jñāna* and *karma*. Since Rāmānuja's exposition of *bhakti* cult is regarded as the best explanation of the philosophical significance of *bhakti*, and because his position stood as a model within the Hindu tradition and among other *bhaktas*, we shall discuss his position in detail. In this discussion we shall follow closely the presentation of Rāmānuja's position made by Bhandarkar.

According to Rāmānuja, the souls are many and are divided into: (1) *Baddha* (tied down to the circle of existence from Brahmadeva to the vilest worm, as well as the vegetable souls) ; (2) *Mukta* (finally delivered) ; and (3) *Nitya* (eternal).

Of the first class, those that are rational, are of two kinds: (1) desirous of enjoyment; and (2) desirous of final deliverance. Some of those who desire final deliverance seek the consciousness of their pure soul only (*kevalin*), and others eternal bliss. Of these latter, some are *bhaktas*, who seek to attain God by resorting to *bhakti*, having first studied the Vedas and acquainted themselves with the Vedānta and the philosophy of rites (*Karman*). The three upper orders (twice-born) alone can practise *bhakti*, but not the Śūdras. These latter are *Prapannas*; i.e. those who take refuge in God, feeling themselves poor and helpless. Of *Prapannas*, some seek the first three objects of life (*dharma*, *artha* and *kāma*), while the rest, finding no pleasure in these, renounce the world, desire eternal bliss (*mokṣa*) alone and, seeking the advice of a *guru* and acquiring from him the impulse to action plunge themselves into the will of God, not having the capacity of

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115. Cf. Bhandarkar, pp. 52-55: also see Thibaut in the SBE, XXXIV, xxvii ff., abridged in RLI, 242-43.

going through the process of *bhakti*. This *Prapatti* (self-surrender to God's Grace) can be practised by all including the *Śūdras*.

Karmayoga, which is the first step towards *bhakti* (through *Jñānayoga*), according to Rāmānuja, is the performance of all acts, rites and ceremonies without regard for the fruit resulting from them. These are the worship of the deity, practice of austerity, pilgrimage to holy places, giving in charity and sacrifices.

As regards the method of *bhakti* (*Bhaktiyoga*), according to Rāmānuja, it consists in continuous meditation accompanied by the practice of the eight yoga processes.[116] This is to be attained by following another sevenfold rite.[117] *Bhakti*, as promoted by these seven means, assumes the form of actually seeing God and produces the final mental perfection.[118]

As we see from the above description of *bhakti* as Rāmānuja set it forth, there is not that passionate and impassioned love for God which the *bhaktas* directed to their beloved God. And there is no yearning on the part of the *bhakta* for a union or communion with the Lord, who is considered to be an intimate and friendly loving God. Rāmānuja's *bhakti* is very mechanical; it is not spontaneous, coming from the core of the *bhakta's* heart which is the abode of that loving God. Moreover, in his system, Rāmānuja has prescribed for the attainment of *bhakti* all those Brāhmanical rites, rituals and ceremonies against which the *bhaktas* waged their life-long crusade, as we have seen in the case of Basava, and we will see in the system of Kabīr. Furthermore, while the *bhaktas* strove to break down all social stratification, and welcomed to their

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116. The Patañjali Yoga is called *Aṣṭāṅga-Yoga* (eightfold discipline). The eight constituents are : (1) abstention, (2) observance, (3) posture, (4) breath-control, (5) withdrawal of the senses, (6) fixed attention, (7) contemplation, and (8) concentration.

117. They are : (1) purification of the body by the use of unpolluted and unprohibited food, (2) chastity, (3) constant practice, (4) the performance of five great rites and ceremonies according to one's means, (5) virtues, such as truth, uprightness, compassion, charity, non-destruction of life, (6) hopefulness or absence of dependency, and (7) absence of elatedness (cf. Bhandarkar, p. 55).

118. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

circles men and women from every walk of life, Rāmānuja still retained the caste distinction of the *Gītā*. It would appear difficult to assert that Rāmānuja's *bhakti* has effected a departure from the type of *bhakti* that is found in the *Gītā* and the *Pāñcarātra* system. Thus commenting on Rāmānuja's system, Bhandarkar maintains :

> Rāmānuja's Vaiṣṇavism is the Vāsudevism of the old Pāñcarātra system combined with the Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu elements. Rāmānuja's doctrines as to the way of reaching the Supreme Soul, are the same as, or amplified forms of, those in the *Bhagavadgītā*. But in this system Bhakti is reduced to the form of a continuous meditation on the Supreme Soul. It thus corresponds to the Upāsanas, or meditations, described by Bādarāyaṇa, and does not mean a boundless love for God, as the word is commonly understood, though the meditation that is enjoined implies tacitly a feeling of love.[119]

The tendency of Rāmānuja's system appears to be to give an exclusive Brāhmanic form to the traditional method of *bhakti*, and this is distinctly seen in the doctrines of the Vaḍakalai, while the Teṇkalai (to these schools we will return soon) is more liberal and so shapes the doctrines of the *bhakti* as to make them applicable to the *Śūdras* also. Rāmānuja was a traditional orthodox Brāhman. Although his attitude towards Hindu tradition, and particularly the caste system, was more liberal than that of many orthodox Hindus of his rank, yet he did not make radical departure from that tradition. Thus it was not possible for him to allow people into his circle from all strata of society, and so he could not prescribe *bhakti* for all. Unlike other *bhaktas*, Rāmānuja used the traditional language, Sanskrit. By using vernacular for religious expression, the *bhaktas* were able to bring the religion of devotion to the hearts of the masses, whereas Rāmānuja kept it within his Brāhmanical circle. Hence another writer comments:

> Rāmānuja was an orthodox Brāhmin, never showed any disregard to the authorities of the Vedas, and the Brāhmanic tradition; nor did he allow any relaxation in

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119. *Ibid.*, p. 57

> the caste rule. He attached much importance to the observance of religious rituals. His official language was Sanskrit, and the teaching was strictly confined to the higher classes of Hindu society. The Śūdras had no access to his system. Only the Brāhmins could be initiated.[120]

Rāmānuja was a philosopher, a monist and theist, but not a *bhakta*, pure and simple like other *bhaktas*. *Bhakti* constituted only a part of his philosophy, whereas *bhakti* was all in all for the *bhaktas*. The only element of liberalism, which is said to have been engendered in him by the *bhakti* cult of the Āḷvārs, is his allowance granted to the *Śūdras* to worship in certain temples on certain specific days. Thus Farquhar remarks :

> While he held strictly by the ancient rule that none but the twice-born may read the Upaniṣads, he was most eager to teach both Śūdras and outcastes the doctrines of Viṣṇu-bhakti. In certain places he arranged that the Outcastes should have the privilege of visiting the temple one day in the year. But there is no reliable evidence for the statement, so often made, that he ate with Outcastes, or that he took any step to alter their special position. He maintained the ancient Hindu restrictions in all their fullness.[121]

Rāmānuja's position is clearly revealed in the use of the *pavitra* (thread of purity), with which *Śūdra* and Outcaste adherents of the sect are invested. "Acknowledgment is thus made", comments Farquhar, "that they are capable of receiving spiritual religion, yet they are kept rigorously apart from the twice-born."[122] The Sātānis, for instance, are a group of people of *Śūdra* caste whom he taught and connected with the sect, but no suggestion was made that their caste status should be altered.

In the later years of his life Rāmānuja was subjected to persecution by the Chola king, Kulottuṅga, who wanted him to renounce Vaiṣṇavism for Śaivism. Consequently, in 1096 Rāmānuja took refuge in the dominions of the Hoysala

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120. Yūsuf Ḥusain, p. 10.

121. RLI, 244-45.

122. *Ibid.*, p. 245; also see A. B. Keith, "Rāmānuja", REE, X (1918), 573-74.

Yādavas, who reigned in Mysore. There he converted from Jainism to Vaiṣṇavism the Crown Prince Viṭṭhala Deva (popularly called Biṭṭi Deva) who took the name Viṣṇuvardhana. Viṭṭhala was in charge of the frontier provinces in the name of his brother Ballāla, who was on the throne.

In this connection we may draw attention to an important historical event. It has been mentioned before that there were large Muslim settlements in the Tamil country. Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, who travelled in these parts of India in the early years of the fourteenth century, tells us that Rāja Vīr Ballāl had a contingent of 20,000 Muslims. It is true, the gap between the time when Rāmānuja lived there (1096-1122),[123] and Ibn Baṭṭūṭah travelled there, is a matter of about two hundred years. But it would be unlikely that all these Muslims would go there at one time. The Muslims had settled there since the seventh century of the Christian era, and by the time of Rāmānuja they must have increased greatly in numbers and assumed major role in the culture.

Whether or not Rāmānuja came under outside influence has been disputed by different writers. There is a general agreement that his intellectuality was moulded by the direct influence of the Āḷvārs on whom Ṣūfī influence has been suggested by many a writer. As regards other influences, George Grierson believes that his monotheistic tendencies were borrowed from Christianity. Speaking about the missionary activity of St. Thomas, Grierson contends that undoubtedly Rāmānuja and his followers imbibed much of this teaching. "Owing to the similarity of the ground ideas of 'faith' and *bhakti*," Grierson goes to say, "it would indeed be extra-ordinary if the two religions, once brought into contact, had not influenced each other."[124] Grierson also suggests that Rāmānuja must have made the acquaintance of the Christian monks at Mylapore, where there was a Syrian Christian Church.

Grierson's view does not appear to be based on sufficient data. Firstly, all information we have tells us that Rāmānuja was a student of the Advaita Vedānta school; having deserted it, he

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123. For these dates, see RLI, 245; also see Bhandarkar, p. 52.
124. "Bhakti-Mārga", p. 549.

went to Śrīraṅgam, where he studied the Āḷvārs' *Prabandham*. He spent most of his life there; and later on developed his philosophical basis for the doctrine of *bhakti* to God which was presented in the *Prabandham* of the Āḷvārs. In his later life, he is reported to have gone to Upper India, whence he returned to Mysore in 1096 and lived there until 1122; then went back to Śrīraṅgam Tiruchirapalli where he died in 1137.[125] In this short history of his life we have no indication that he had any opportunity to meet any Christian monks any where.

Secondly, there is considerable uncertainty about the spread of Christianity in South India in the early centuries of the Christian era and the missionaries that took part in it, as C.E. Abraham tells us. Even the identity of the province of India in which early missionaries are supposed to have worked is not certain.[126] "The claim of tradition", says Rev. Abraham, "that St. Thomas, one of the apostles of Jesus Christ, came to South India in 52 A.D. and established several churches on the Malabar coast and converted many Hindus to Christianity, is a highly disputed matter among the modern scholars."[127]

However, there is some evidence for the arrival in Malabar of a body of the Christian immigrants from Persia. Their leader is generally known among Malabar Christians as Knae Thomman (Thomas the Merchant). But there is no unanimity of opinion about the date of this migration. Some put it in 345 A.D. while others suggest about four centuries or more later.[128]

At any rate, the earliest historical evidence for the existence of a church in South India dates from the sixth century.[129] This small Christian community is described as poor, destitute and was so weak and insignificant that it had hardly anything to influence Hindu thought. In fact, Abraham opines that the

125. See Keith, p. 572.

126. Cf. "The Rise and Growth of Christianity in India", in CHIB, IV, 547.

127. *Ibid.*, p. 548; also see Mingana Alphonse, "The Early Spread of Christianity in India", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Manchester, X (1926), 435-514; J. N. Farquhar, "The Apostle Thomas in South India", *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Manchester, XI (1927), 32 ff.; Hunter, W. W., *The Indian Empire*, London, 1882, p. 372.

128. See Rev. Abraham, n. 3, p. 548.

129. *Ibid.*, ns. 4 and 5, p. 549.

fact that the caste system in the Christian community of South India has been as widely prevalent as among the Hindus, shows that "Christianity was more absorbed by Hinduism than it really altered the pattern of social structure."[130] It can be asserted with reasonable certainty that the Christian community in South India in Rāmānuja's day was not as influential as the Muslim community.

Yūsuf Ḥusain, rejecting Grierson's contention, reminds us of the Śaiva Adiyars and the Vaiṣṇava Āḷvārs, on whom the influence of Sūfīsm has been suggested by many, and that it is an accepted fact that the Āḷvārs paved the way for the rise of Rāmānuja.[131] However, in the absence of any clear evidence one way or the other, we cannot commit ourselves to either position. Rāmānuja may have been influenced by either Christianity or by Islām, or by both. But one may also argue with equal force another thesis: that Rāmānuja was not influenced by any non-Hindu ideas, but rather that Islām and Christianity as practised in South India were influenced by his ideas. Of course, there is no evidence for this position either. The crux of the problem lies in the fact that records of medieval Indian religious movements were not carefully preserved.

At any rate, whatever ideas Rāmānuja might have imbibed from the Ṣūfīs, Zaehner seems to have gone far afield in saying: "In admitting a plurality of souls Rāmānuja, of course, stands much nearer to Muslim orthodoxy than to any of his predecessors."[132] This contention is untenable from the historical point of view, for both Sāṅkhya-Yoga and Jainism accept the doctrine of a plurality of souls. Zaehner further states that "Rāmānuja's interpretation of Brahman as the sum-total of individual souls finds a parallel in Ṣūfīsm."[133] That may be, but the fact remains that neither the Qur'ān nor the Indian Ṣūfīs talk much about the metaphysical subtleties of the soul. The Indian Ṣūfīs were primarily propagators of a simple religion flavoured with love and devotion for Allāh; and it was for this simplicity that the Hindu

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130. *Op. cit.*, p. 557.
131. *Op. cit.*, p. 11.
132. HMM, 16.
133. *Ibid.*

masses were impressed by Ṣūfī teachings and were attracted to Islām. Therefore, if we are to look for any Ṣūfī influence on Rāmānuja, we should do so in the domain of simple religion, i.e. there is one God, who deserves love and affection from us for He loves us; there is one humanity; in the eyes of God we are all equal; because He has created us all equal; the believers are all brothers; etc., and not in subtle metaphysical and philosophical problems, such as the nature of the soul. There is a great controversy among Muslim philosophers and Ṣūfī philosophers on this problem, which is beyond the scope of our discussion.

Before we conclude our discussion on Rāmānuja, we must return to the doctrine of *prapatti* to which Rāmānuja has made allusion, but which in later times became the fundamental point of difference between two schools of *bhakti*, and one of the bases of Kabīr's thought.

THE DOCTRINE OF PRAPATTI

The relation between *bhakti* and *prapatti* was left obscure in Rāmānuja's teaching, for it immediately formed a subject of bitter division between the two schools which claim to follow his teaching — the Vaḍakalai (northern school) which used Sanskrit as its medium of teaching, and the Teṇkalai (southern school), which resorted to the vernacular, thus continuing the tradition of the Āḷvārs. The Northern School reflects more closely the temper of Rāmānuja in its conservatism and restraint.

Prapatti consists in the resolution to submit, to yield; the avoidance of opposition, a faith that God will protect; the choosing of God as the saviour or praying to Him to save, and the sense of helplessness resulting in placing oneself at His disposal and the consciousness of utter abasement. Thus there are six constituents of *prapatti*.[134] In other words, *prapatti* means self-surrender to God's protection and grace which precludes all kinds of religious obligations on the part of a *prapanna*.

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134. They are : (1) *ānukūlyasya saṅkalpa*, (2) *prātikūlyasya varjanam*, (3) *rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāso*, (4) *goptṛtvavaraṇam tathā*, (5) *ātmanikṣepa*, and (6) *kārpaṇye ṣaḍvidhā śaraṇāgatiḥ* (cf. Bhandarkar, n. 2, p. 55; also see Keith, p. 573).

The essential difference between the two schools is brought out by the different illustrations that they give of the connection between God's grace and man's effort in bringing about final deliverance. The illustration given by the former school (Vaḍagalai) is that of a monkey and her cub (called the Monkey doctrine = *Markaṭakiśoranyāya*). The idea is that the cub is to hold fast to its mother to be carried to a safe place. The latter school (Teṇkalai) uses the illustration of the cat and its kitten (called the Cat theory = *Mārjārakiśoranyāya*). The idea is that the female cat catches hold of the kitten, without any effort on its part, and takes it to a place of safety.

In the first school the doctrine is that the process of deliverance must begin with an act of a person seeking it. According to the second school, on the other hand, the process begins with God Himself. In keeping with this distinction is the idea of *prapatti* held by the two schools.

The first maintains that *prapatti* is one of the ways, not the only way, and that it should be resorted to by the devotee only when it was found impossible to attain the desired result by the other modes. Moreover, they found in it essentially an element of human action in that it demanded a distinct effort on the part of the *prapanna*, resulting from the effect of his sense of submission. The southern school, on the contrary, holds that *prapatti* was the only way of salvation, that it is a frame of mind which characterises all those who seek absolution and reject all other ways in favour of this; that it excludes any action on the part of the devotee;[135] action emanating from God alone, and that the sense of yielding was the outcome of *prapatti*, not the means of producing it. Those who resort to other ways have not arrived at the right mood which leads to God. In contradistinction to Vaḍakalai, Teṇkalai holds that *prapatti* is necessary for all, whether able or not, to follow the other ways. "Self-assertiveness is the characteristic of the first," says Bhandarkar. "but it is forbidden by the second and self-abandonment is enjoined."[136]

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135. Cf. G. A. Grierson, "Prapatti-Mārga", ERE, X (1918), 151.
136. *Op.cit.*, p.56.

Similarly, the two schools differ in their treatment of *Śūdras*. The northern school teaches that a person belonging to an inferior caste should be treated well only so far as conversation by words is concerned. The southern school says that they should be admitted to an equal treatment in all respects and no distinction be made.[137] The former school was led by an orthodox Brāhman called Vedānta Deśika, while the latter was headed by Piḷḷali Lokāchārya.[138]

Since Kabīr accepted the doctrine of the Teṇkalai, there cannot be any comparison between him and Rāmānuja, whose *bhakti* is based on the model of the *Gītā* about which we have already commented.

BHAKTI IN THE BHĀGAVATA PURĀṆA

After Rāmānuja, almost all the *bhaktas*, with the sole exception of Kabīr, were permeated by the influence of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the most important *bhakti* literature after the *Gītā*. Farquhar tells us that much of the peculiar fervour and attractive power of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* comes from the devotion of the Āḷvārs.[139] According to the same writer, this *Purāṇa* was written by some Bhāgavata-Vaiṣṇava ascetic of the Tamil lands in about 900 A.D.[140]

The distinguishing feature of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is its new theory of *bhakti*. "Some of its utterances on this subject", comments Farquhar, "are worthy of a place in the best literature of mysticism and devotion."[141] *Bhakti* in this work may be

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137. See *ibid.*; also cf. Keith, p. 573. For further information, see *Indian Theism*, pp. 110-11.

138. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 110; also see A. Govindacarya, "The Aṣṭādaśa-Bhedas, or the Eighteen Points of Doctrinal Differences Between the Teṇgalais (Southerners) and the Vaḍagalais (Northerners) of the Viśiṣṭādvaita Vaiṣṇava School, South India", *JRAS*, XLII (1910), 1103-12.

139. RLI, 220.

140. *Ibid.*, pp. 229. Different dates have been suggested for this *Purāṇa* (see also pp. 231-32).

141. RLI, 229. This element can be studied in the *Bhaktiratnāvalī* (Necklace of Bhakti Gems), a collection of *bhakti* passages from the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* made by an ascetic named Viṣṇu Purī, who belonged to the school

summarised in the words of Farquhar: "A surging emotion which chokes the speech, makes the tears flow and the hair thrill with pleasurable excitement, and often leads to hysterical laughing and weeping by turns, to sudden fainting fits and long trances of unconsciousness."[142] The activities that produce such a situation centre round Kṛṣṇa alone.

Apart from this emotional character, the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* also contains a long series of highly erotic passages. In these, Kṛṣṇa's dalliance with the gopis is depicted in sensuous and glowing poetry which captivated the imaginations of many *bhaktas* in later times.

In the thirteenth century, the Vaiṣṇava *bhakti* of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* type became a popular religious phenomenon in the Maratha country of which Jñāneśvara (popularly called Dnyanoba) was its first exponent.[143] He is said to have been an enthusiastic *bhakta* and was the leader of a group of saints.

NĀMDEV

About one hundred years after Jñāneśvara there appeared in the same country another great *bhakta* called Nāmdev (*ca* 1400-1430).[144] He was a tailor, but he spent his life in

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of Madhva. He arranged them according to subject in thirteen groups, translated into Bengali by Lauriya Kṛṣṇa Dāsa early in the fifteenth century (cf. *ibid.*, n. 1, p. 303).

142. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

143. According to a tradition which appears in the *Bhakta-Māla* of Nābhāji (1600 A.D.), Jñāneśvara was a disciple of Viṣṇuswāmī, the founder of the Rudra-sampradāya, one of the four schools of the Bhakti-Mārga, whose philosophy was a synthesis between polytheism and monotheism.

Jñāneśvara is said to have been the author of the following works in Marathi: (1) on the *Gītā* called the *Jñāneśvarī* which runs to 10,000 couplets (date 1290), (2) *Harīpāṭh*, a collection of 28 hymns, (3) *Amṛitānubhava*, an Advaita Śaiva philosophical work. His writings decidedly show the influence of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (see *ibid.*, p. 235). Also cf. Rev. J. Stevenson, "An Account of the Bauddha-Vaishṇavas, or Viṭṭhal-Bhaktas of the Dekhan" *JRAS*, VII (1843), 64-73.

144. There is a local tradition to the effect that Nāmdev and Jñāneśvara met at least once, while in the *Bhakta-Māla* they are presented as master and disciple. In view of this, Nāmdev has usually been placed at the end of the

propagating the *bhakti* cult in his own country and in the Punjab.[145] He expressed his *bhakti* feelings in songs. In his psalms, it is usually suggested, the influence of Islām first appears in the Maratha country. He and his followers criticised idolatry severely, though image-worship persisted in his system.[146] We may quote some of his songs recorded in the *Ādi Granth*. By familiar examples, he describes his love for God:

As the deer followeth the huntsman's bell,
And giveth up its own life rather than cease its attention,
In the same way I gaze on God.
I do not leave Him to turn my mind in another direction.
As the kingfisher gazeth on the fish,
As the goldsmith *meditateth* stealing gold while fashioning it,
As the lustful man gazeth on the wife of another,
As the gambler meditateth cheating while playing kaurīs,
So Nāma ever meditateth on God's feet —
Wherever I gaze there is God.[147]

Speaking about Nāmdev and the *bhakti* sects and schools that had preceded him, Dasgupta maintains that all *bhakti* schools, before him, developed under "Brāhmanic traditions and in the shadow of Brāhmanic scriptures, the Purāṇas and the like." The Brāhmanic tradition has such a strong hold over the country, says Dasgupta, that the *bhakti* cult grew up around

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thirteenth, and the beginning of the fourteenth century. But in consideration of his polished Maraṭhi, Bhandarkar is inclined to date him a century later (see *op. cit.*, p. 92). A number of his hymns are included in the *Ādi-Granth*, and he is regarded as one of a few *bhaktas* who, coming just before Rāmānanda, prepared the way for him. And Rāmānanda is said to have flourished in the second and third quarters of the fifteenth century (1400-1470); so that Nāmdev's rise to prominence would be somewhere about 1400 to 1430. Baleśvar Prasād, a prominent scholar of Hindu literature, mentions 1423 as his floruit; which agrees fully with the above reasoning and also with Bhandarkar's conjecture. This chronology is finally established by one of Nāmdev's own disciples (cf. Macnicol, N., *Psalms of Maraṭha Saints*, Calcutta, 1919, p. 41; also see *RLI*, 299).

145. He seems to have been quite influential in the Punjab, for a shrine dedicated to him is still held sacred at Ghuman in the Gurdaspur district (cf. Macauliffe, M.A., SR, VI, 39).

146. Cf. RLI, 299.

147. Quoted by Macauliffe, pp. 54-55.

the traditional cult of Rāma, or Kṛṣṇa, Śiva or Śaktī: "Representation of God in images and their worship by the bhaktas", the writer goes on to say, "faith in the legends of Kṛṣṇa and other inferior deities as told in the Purāṇas, preferential treatment of the Brāhman caste, respect to the Vedas, etc., became intimately associated with the doctrine of bhaktı preached in the Purāṇas and other Sanskrit scriptures."[148]

But in the thirteenth century, Visoba Khecar, the teacher of Nāmdev, denounced the worship of images as a substitute for the God Kṛṣṇa or for any other god. He is reported to have instructed Nāmdev to abandon image worship, saying:

> A stone god never speaks, What possibility then of his removing the disease of mundane existence ? A stone image is regarded as God, but the true God is wholly different. If a stone god fulfils desires, how is it he breaks when struck ? Those who adore a god made of stone, lose everything through their folly. Those who say and hear that a god of stone speaks to his devotees are both of them fools. Whether a holy place is small or large there is no god but stone or water. There is no place which is devoid of God. That God has shown Nāmo in his heart and thus Khecar conferred a blessing on him.[149]

Like his teacher, Nāmdev himself is reported to have said contemptuously: "A god of stone and a worshipper who is deceived.... Such gods were broken in pieces by the Turks. They threw them into the water as all know."[150] Nāmdev has not only repudiated idolatry, he has equally rejected, like Appar, Basava and Kabīr, all religious ceremonies and rituals:

> Vows, fasts and austerities are not at all necessary; nor is it necessary for you to go on a pilgrimage. Be you watchful in your hearts and always sing the name of Harī. It is not necessary to give up eating food or drinking water; fix your mind on the foot of Harī. Neither is it necessary for you to

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148. HM, 52; also see *Hinduism*, p. 138.
149. Quoted by Bhandarkar, p. 152.
150. LRI, 134.

contemplate the one without attribute. Hold fast the love of the name of Hari.[151]

In another place Nāmdev speaks on the advantage of repeating God's name:

By repeating the name of God all doubts are dispelled —
Repeating the name of God is the highest religious exercise — By repeating the name of God caste and lineage are effaced. That God is the staff of the blind man. I bow before God ! I bow before God ! By repeating God's name death tortureth not. God took the life of Harnākhas, And made for Ajāmal a dwelling in heaven. The courtesan who taught her parrot *to repeat God's name*.
That God is the apple of mine eye —
By repeating the name of God, Pūtana[152] full of deceit,
The destroyer of children was saved ;
By remembering the name of God the daughter of Drupad was saved ;
... ...
Nāma representh, by repeating the name of such a God fear and trouble depart.[153]

In the following words, Nāmdev tells us of the fate of worshippers of false gods :

They who worship Bhairava shall become sprites;
They who worship Śītala shall ride on donkeys and scatter dust —
For myself I take the *name* of the one God ;
I would give *all* other gods in exchange for it.
They who repeat the name of Śiva and worship him,
Shall ride on an ox and play the drum ;
They who worship the great mother *Durgā*,
Shall be born as women instead of men.
Thou callest thyself, *O Durgā*, the primal Bhawānī,

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151. Cited in HM, 152; also see p. 153.

152. Harnākhas is the demon Hiraṇyākṣa, father of Prahlāda. Pūtanā is believed to be that nurse whom Kans sent to destroy Kṛṣṇa by applying poison to the nipples of her breasts. Kṛṣṇa, though an infant, squeezed her to death. With her last breath she said : "God, let me go." For uttering the name of God even once she obtained salvation. Ajāmila, a sinner, was retrieved by Viṣṇu, see Bhāgavata, VIII, 1.

153. *Ādī-Granth*, cited by Macauliffe, pp. 56-57.

When it came to my turn to be saved, where didst thou
Under the instruction of the guru, hide thyself ?
O my friend, cling to God's name —
Nāma representh, thus saith the Gītā.[154]

Again on the futility of idolatry :

If I bring a pitcher and fill it with water to bathe the idol,
Forty-two lakhs of animal species are in the water ;
God is contained in them; why should I bathe Him ?
Wherever I go there God is contained ;
God supremely happy ever sporteth.
If I bring flowers and weave a garland to worship the idol,
The bee hath first smelled the flowers ;
God is contained *in the bee* ; why should
I weave Him a garland ?
If I bring milk and cook it with khīr[155] to feed the idol,
The calf hath first defiled the milk by tasting it ; God is contained *in the calf*; why should I feed Him ?
In this world is God; in the next world is God; *there* is no *part of the world* without Him.
Thou art, O God, in every place ; Nāma representh,
Thou fillest the whole earth.[156]

Nāmdev's saying remind us what the Ṣūfīs teach people about remembering God's name (*dhikr*) ; their neglect to formal religion, e.g. pilgrimage, prayer and fasting; their objection to a life of *sanyāsin* or celebate; their insistence on the purity of heart which is the dwelling place of God; and their denunciation of polytheism and idolatry. Nāmdev clearly rejects the idea of contemplation on a *nirguṇa* Brahman. That means, he was not a follower of spiritual monism, rather a monotheist *bhakta*. It may be asserted without any doubt that Nāmdev's sayings betray Ṣūfī influence on him, though we have no specific evidence on his acquaintance with Ṣūfīs. Like Kabīr, he ridicules both Hindus and Muslims for their external religious observances. Thus he says :

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154. *Ādi-Granth*, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 57.

155. Rice boiled in milk and sugar. It is a common dessert in the Indian sub-continent, served usually along with some other sweets.

156. *Ādi-Granth*, cited by Macauliffe, p. 42.

The Hindus are blind, the Musalmāns purblind:
The man who knoweth God is wiser than either.
The Hindus worship their temple, the Musalmāns their mosque.[157]

From our brief study of Nāmdev's ideas, we can say that before Kabīr, Appar, Basava and Nāmdev all appear to reveal Ṣūfī influence on them, and to make a clear departure from the Hindu tradition.[158]

In southern India there were two other great *bhaktas*, namely, Madhva or Ānandatīrtha (1199-1278) of South Kanara and Nimbārka (of uncertain date) of the Telugu country. Their ideas were based on the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and both were indebted to Rāmānuja. We omit any discussion of them here, for they were not directly dependent on Ṣūfī teachings, except in reference to the general idea of *bhakti*.[159]

There were a few *bhaktas*, male and female, in northern India and Bengal up to the time of Kabīr. But for our purpose we propose to select only three, namely, Rāmānanda, Nānak and Śri Chaitanya. But we would reverse this chronology, for Kabīr was the direct disciple of Rāmānanda.

ŚRĪ CHAITANYA

Śrī Chaitanya (Viśvaṃbhara Miśra, 1485-1533) was born in Bengal (Nudia district). In 1507 he was won to an ascetic life and the practice of the passionate *bhakti* of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, by Īśvara Puri, an ascetic of the Mādhva sect. He began to preach and soon gathered round him a large number of disciples — Hindus as well as Muslims. Then he came under the influence of the Nimbārkas and the Viṣṇuswāmīs, and sang delightfully the songs of Jayadeva (author of the Gīta-Govinda), Chanḍīdās and Vidyāpati. He gave Rādhā (the imaginary

157. *Ibid.*, p. 58.

158. For more information about Nāmdev's doctrines, see *ibid.*, pp. 54-58; also see K. V. Gajendragadkar, "The Mahārāṣṭra Saints and their Teachings", in CHIB, IV, 356-76.

159. For brief information about them, see RLI, 236, 239-40, 303; B. N. K. Sharma, CHIB, IV, 349-55; G. A. Grierson, "Mādhvas, Mādhvāchāris", ERE VIII (1915), 232-35; A. S. Geden, "Nimavats", ERE, IX (1917), 373-74; Padmanābhāchār, C. M., LTM.

consort of Kṛṣṇa) a prominent place in his worship. He used to sing Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa hymns with his disciples, rousing them to devotional excitement. Very often he would go out through the city in procession, "dancing and singing with such fervour and contagious emotion as to carry the people away in devotional rapture."[160]

Chaitanya's popularity spread like wild fire throughout Bengal and Orissa since he became a *Sanyāsi* in 1509. As a result, people from every walk of life, such as Sārvabhauma, a great logician of that time; Pratap Rudra, the king of Orissa: his minister Rāmānanda Roi, swelled the rank and file of his disciples. Then he came to be regarded as an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa by the people of his home district. And thus came into existence, his cult.

Chaitanya made the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa myth the basis of his teaching and worship. So intense was his desire to be to Kṛṣṇa as Rādhā was to her divine lover, that he was sometimes heard to murmur, "I am He."[161] And Chaitanya's power over men came from the reality of his mystical religious experience, which he exhibited through overpowering emotions and an impassioned love for God. Chaitanya also seems to have believed in the brotherhood and equality of man; consequent to this, he is said to have made some relaxation in the caste rules as far as his circle of disciples was concerned. It is probably for this reason that the Muslims were also his disciples.[162] Notwithstanding his liberal attitude to all, he would not allow any of his Muslim disciples to dine together with his Hindu disciples, nor would he allow any Muslim to enter into a Hindu house or a temple.[163] Finally, towards the end of his life, he initiated a programme of reconverting the Muslims to Hinduism.[164] Thus, he came to be seen to be inconsistent in

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160. RLI, 307; also see HCIP, VI, 566.

161. *Indian Theism*, p. 131.

162. Cf. HCIP, VI, 568. One of his favourite disciples was a Muslim devotee named Haridāsa.

163. See *ibid.* For further information about Chaitanya, see De, S. K., EHVFMB; John Beames, "Chaitanya and the Vaishṇava Poets of Bengal: Studies in the Bengali Poetry of the 15th and 16th Centuries", *IA*, II (1873), 1-7.

164. See 'Azīz Aḥmad, SICIE, 86.

theory and practice; consequently, the Muslims deserted his circle.

Although Chaitanya does not seem to have effected a clear departure from Hindu tradition, his catholicism may be regarded as having been in some way the result of Ṣūfī influence, as well as other possible influences. If we recollect how intense and vigorous was the impact of Ṣūfīsm in Bengal, where it scored its greatest success in winning Hindus to Islām, it would be unnatural to think that Chaitanya did not feel its effect. There is no evidence, however, to show that he had any direct contact with any Ṣūfī; on the contrary, he appears to have met many Hiṇdu *bhakti* followers, and imbibed ideas from almost all Hindu *bhaktas* contemporary or near contemporary to him. But his practice of *kirtan* (singing the praise of the Lord with devotion) which was a novelty in the *bhakti* cult, is reminiscent of Ṣūfī *Qawwāli* which is sung by the Ṣūfīs frequently in praise and love of God. Finally, Chaitanya's sect, like those of Vallabha and Mīrā Bāī, was an erotic *bhakti* sect for which we have no parallel in Ṣūfīsm, or for that matter in Kabīr. In fact, Chaitanya differs from Kabīr in all respects with the exception of his (Chaitanya) somewhat limited catholicity.

GURU NĀNAK

Let us now turn to Nānak (1469-1538), the founder of the Sikh religion in the Punjāb.[165] Although Nānak is later than Kabīr, and is said to have been influenced by the teaching of the latter, we consider him before Kabīr in order to maintain continuity in our discussion on Kabīr. The relation between Kabīr and Nānak is described thus :

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165. He was given the name Nānak Nirākārī or Niraṅkārī, i.e., 'Nānak, servant of the formless one.' He is also known as Guru Nānak, Bābā Nānak and Nānak Shāh. While *guru* is a Sanskrit word meaning 'spiritual preceptor', the last two Hindi and Persian, and also Urdu words, meaning father or one worthy of reverence, and 'king' or 'chief' respectively. These names indicate the mingling of Hindu and Muslim ideas.

When one passes from Kabīr to Nānak one is not conscious of any change of atmosphere. The main ideas of the two teachers are the same, and both teach principles of inwardness and devotion, and commend the way of quietism and of meditation. They are alike in betraying evident traces of both Hindu and Muslim influence, and at the same time they agree in standing apart from these two faiths, criticising them in the forms in which they see them, and seeking to reconcile them.[166]

Thus, like Kabīr, Nānak says : "I am neither Hindu nor Muhammadan, but a worshipper of the Nirākār or the Formless."[167] Moreover, the prominence given to Kabīr in Nānak's *Ādi Granth* (or *Granth Sāhib*)[168] is taken as an evidence of the former's influence on the latter.[169] Nānak is said to have been 27 years of age when he met Kabīr. As Nānak was born in 1469, the year of their meeting would have been 1496, the very year in which Sikandar Lūdhī, the Sulṭān of Delhi, visited Jaunpur and other cities in that neighbourhood.[170] But Farquhar finds no evidence of their meeting.[171]

Nānak was born in a village near Lahore called Talwandi (named after him Nankāna). His father, Kālū, a small farmer, was connected with the Muslim Rājpūts of the

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Nānak was the founder and the first of the ten *gurus* of the Sikh community. Wherever representations of him are found, he is invariably shown as an old man with flowing white beard, obviously, symbolising his great wisdom. For Nānak's life, see his *Janamsākhī* (biography, originally in the Punjābī language in *Gurmukhī* character — the dialect used by Nānak) in E. Trumpp's translation of the *Ādī-Granth*; also see Macauliffe, I, 1-194; Singh, K., *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I, Princeton, 1963; J. W. Youngson, "Nānak", ERE, IX (1917), 181-84.

166. RIIT, 144.

167. *Ibid.*, pp. 144-45.

168. *Granth* is a Sanskrit word means, 'Book'; while *Ādi* means 'the first' *Sāhib*, an Arabic, Persian and Urdu word, means 'Lord'. The Sikhs look on this Book as their 'Lord' whom they must obey. It is a collection of religious and moral poems in Punjābī, Hindī, and even Persian, and apothegms composed and uttered by Nānak and other religious teachers, e.g. Kabīr and Nāmdev. It was compiled in 1604. Also see Nānak's *Japjī*, tr. Gurdip Singh Randhawa, Delhi, 1970.

169. See Archer, J. C., *The Sikhs*, 56.

170. See Westcott, G. H., KKP, 2.

171. RLI, 336.

Bhatti tribe. As a boy, he was different from others of his age, and exhibited unusual talent. He was of a meditative disposition. As a schoolboy he said to his teacher :

Burn world love, rub the ashes and make ink of it ;
make of faith the best kind of paper ;
Make the heart the pen, the intellect the writer ;
ask the guru and write the judgment ;
Write the Name and the praise thereof,
write that which has no end or limit.
Sir, if you are able to teach me this manner
of knowledge, then teach me. [172]

Soon after, Nānak appears to have left school and associated with Hindu *sādhus* and Muslim *faqirs*. Although he got married and had two children, still he was frequently seen in the company of Ṣūfīs and ascetics. By the time Nānak became an adult, the teaching of Kabīr seems to have spread throughout north India. Apart from Kabīr's influence on him, Nānak is also said to have had regular intercourse with other Ṣūfīs, such as Shāh Bū 'Alī Qalandar, Shaykh Ibrāhīm and Miyān Mithā.[173]

J.C. Archer tells us that Nānak was about fifty years of age when, in response to a vision, he entered the final phase of his mystical career. God then commissioned him to "repeat the Name," also to inspire others to repeat it, and "to teach all mankind the true religion."[174] It is related that Nānak, under the inspiration of this religious experience, uttered the basic text (*mūlamantra*) that laid the foundation of Sikhism, namely,

One, the essential Oṁ, True Name,
Doer, pervader, fearless, without enmity,
Figure of Timelessness, self-existent,
the kindly guide, Praise !
Primeval truth, ageless truth, the actual truth,
The truth, O Nānak, which can never fade.[175]

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172. Cited by Youngson, p. 182.
173. Cf. Yūsuf Ḥusain, p. 28.
174. *The Sikhs*, p. 73.
175. *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

Commenting on the above text, Archer says: "Sikhs have sometimss compared this 'revelation' with the 'This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him !' of the Christian tradition; with the Qur'ānic 'Say, He alone is God, the eternal One,' and with the Vedānta thesis, 'Thou art That.''[176]

In consideration of the fact that Nānak developed an attitude of catholicism in regard to religion, his conception of God had to be universal one. In this, he believed in God as the omnipotent reality, but maintained that the individual soul could attain union with Him through love and devotion, and not by performing ceremonial rites. Nānak left no vagueness in his saying about the oneness of God, no matter what name he has used. This is also true in the case of Basava, Nāmdev and Kabīr. Besides proclaiming an absolute monotheism, Nānak has also declared the brotherhood of man, one of the fundamental teachings of Islām. In that, he articulated that the law of life for human beings was to love one another and to find God through loving devotion (*bhakti*). Like Kabīr, in his desire for Hindu-Muslim unity, Nānak did proclaim: "There is no Hindu, nor is there a Musalmān, but only brethren under God.''[177]

Like Kabīr and others, Nānak unequivocally rejected the efficacy of rites and ceremonies; and categorically condemned the Hindu caste system. In the *Janamsākhi* it is mentioned that in the course of his travels, Nānak decided to stay with an outcaste. There was consternation among the Brāhmans. Having realised their dismay, Nānak said: "You are puzzled because I am staying with a good, kind and hardworking man, who is doing his duty." Then the great teacher said:

Rember,
Actions determine caste,
Man exalts or lowers himself by his own acts.
By devotion to the sacred Name
Release from the wheel of birth and death is obtained.
Do not worry about distinction of caste

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176. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
177. *Ibid.*, p. 75.

Realize that His light is in all
There is no caste on the other side.[178]

These ideas of Nānak are reminiscent of what we have seen before in Ṣūfīsm, and in the sayings of some *bhaktas*. Therefore, the passage hardly needs any further explanation. The similarity between Kabīr and Nānak is conspicuous. Both had the same mission of uniting Hinduism and Islām. For this reason neither of them has rejected either Hinduism or Islām totally, but retained essential elements of the two religions. For example, like Kabīr, Nānak seems to have believed in the doctrine of metempsychosis and karma, as we have seen in the above passage. And like Kabīr, Nānak did not organise any sect during his life time.

We have no intention of going into further details about Nānak. The contents of the *Ādi-Granth* unmistakably testify to the fact that Nānak was very much influenced by Islamic ideas which came to him through Kabīr's teaching, on the one hand, and through his direct association with the Ṣūfīs, on the other.

Therefore, Nānak and Kabīr belong to a class of *bhaktas* on whom the influence of Ṣūfīsm can be demonstrated, whereas Nāmdev, Basava and Appar should belong to another group of *bhaktas* on whom the Ṣūfī influence is highly probable, even though there is no direct evidence.

We are now in a position to examine the life and teaching of a great *bhakta*, who was the link between the *bhakti* cult of south and north India, and who was the direct *guru* of Kabīr. It was Rāmānanda. Before we enter into our discussion of Rāmānanda, it will not be out of place to mention here that there is a difference of opinion among the scholars as to whether or not the South Indian *bhaktas* were permeated by the influence of Ṣūfīs, as we have seen so far. But as for north India there is an almost complete unanimity among the writers that beginning from the thirteenth century when permanent Muslim rule was established in Delhi (1206 A. D.) and a new wave of Ṣūfīs entered into north India and then spread all over the sub-continent, the influence of Islām

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178. *Janamsākhī*, cited by Yūsuf Ḥusain, pp. 28-29.

became much stronger than ever before; and the *bhaktas* of this period, particularly those of north India, were directly influenced by the Ṣūfīs. Rāmānanda, Kabīr and Nānak are considered to have been the products of this Ṣūfī influence.

RĀMĀNANDA

Rāmānanda (*ca.*1400-1470), was born in Prayāga (modern Allahābād).[179] The dearth of information about him is due to Rāmānandis' taking special care to keep all details of their sect and its founder a profound secret, as M. A. Macauliffe tells us.[180] However, a brief reconstruction of his life, is not impossible.

George Grierson tells us that Rāmānanda had his early education in Banares from a Śrī Vaiṣṇava teacher called Rāghavānanda. On the authority of the *Bhakta Māla* (1600 A.D.) the same author also informs us that he was 4th or 5th in spiritual descent from Rāmānuja,[181] which does not seem to be historically tenable. Tara Chand, on the authority of Sitārām Bhagwān Prasād, insists that he was twenty-second in descent from Rāmānuja.[182] *Bhakta Māla* compares him to Rāma, and makes him an incarnation of God come down from heaven to save the world. At any rate, in his later life, he seems to have gone to the South and joined the school of Rāmānuja. Then he went on a pilgrimage to the Himalayas and other places including

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179. Ramadatta was the original name which was changed to Rāmānanda by his teacher, Rāghavānanda, who taught him Śrī Vaiṣṇava system (see G. A. Grierson, "Rāmānandis, Rāmāwats", *ERE*, X (1918), 569-70). Widely divergent dates have been suggested for his activity, e.g. 1299, by Grierson. But it seems possible to fix his date approximately within narrow limits, taking into consideration some known dates of his disciples. His disciple, Pīpā, for example, was born in 1425, while another disciple, Kabīr, seems to have lived from 1440-1518. Hence it will not be too far from the truth to fix his floruit approximately between 1400-1470. This date places Rāmānanda 350 years after Rāmānuja, which fits well the interval between them (cf. J. N. Farquhar, "The Historical Position of Rāmānanda", *JRAS*, LII (1920), 185-92; LIV (1922), 373-80.

180. Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 100.

181. See "Rāmānandis, etc.", p. 569;....., "Bhakti-Mārga", p. 546.

182. Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 143; also see pp. 144 f.

Banares. In the latter place, he is said to have stayed for a few years. When he went back to the South, he was interrogated by his co-religionists, on which his attitude to the Śrī Vaiṣṇava rules was found radically changed; consequent to this he was expelled from that sect; and he came to Banares in about 1430 A.D. The detailed history of his doctrinal differences from the system of Rāmānuja has been amply discussed by many renowned scholars, and need not detain us here.[183]

One of the fundamental points of difference between Rāmānuja and Rāmānanda is on the question of caste rules. The former, as we have noticed, despite his good intentions to extend the scope of religion as far as possible, followed the caste rules rigidly, and as a result did not include the lower castes in his circle; the latter, on the other hand, neglected these rules, as well as the dietary and bathing rules. The liberalism and catholicity of his attitude to human beings as far as religion is concerned can be measured by the very fact that he admitted to his circle men and women from every strata of the society. His twelve principal disciples, belonging to every section of the society, were also the founders of different sects. Hence one writer says, "The catholicity of Rāmānanda's teaching may be gathered from the fact he numbered among his twelve chief disciples, or apostles, a Musalmān (weaver) (Kabīr), a barbar (Sena), and a low-caste *Chamār*, or leather-worker (Rai-dāsa), each of whom founded a sub sect."[184] Since Rāmānanda's disciples were free from observing any particular rules and regulations, he named them the *Avadhūtas* (the liberated ones). Rāmānanda is seen as one who has practised the doctrine of human equality and brotherhood in its most liberal sense for religious purposes. Hence it is remarked,

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183. See RLI, 323-25; Bhandarkar, p. 67; Macauliffe, VI, 100-105.

184. "Bhakti-Mārga", p. 546. The twelve disciples were : (1) Anantānanda, a Brāhman, (2) Sukhānanda, a poet (his hymns are famous, and have been collected in a volume entitled the *Sukhasāgara*, (3) Surāsurānanda, husband of No. 12, (through him, Tulsidāsa traced his descent from Rāmānanda), (4) Naraharīyānanda, (5) Pīpā, a Rājpūt rājā of Gagaraun, (6) Kabīr, (7) Bhavānanda , (8) Sena, (9) Dhana, a simple peasant belonging to the Jaṭ caste, (10) Rāi Dās, (11), Padmavatī, a woman, and (12) Surāsarī, wife of No. 3.

"His ethical system was based not on the spiritual pride, but on spiritual humility."[185] His teaching may be summed up as : (1) that perfect *bhakti* consists in perfect love directed to God, and (2) that all devotees or servants of God are brothers.

Finally, unlike Rāmānuja, Rāmānanda rejected the Hindu holy language for religious teaching; instead he adopted the vernacular, Hindi, and thus brought his doctrines within reach of the masses.

Now, Rāmānanda's liberal attitude in matters of religion is seen as a result of Ṣūfī influence on him. Thus Farquhar maintains that albeit Rāmānanda's complete neglect of all caste distinctions in the acceptance of disciples was not a novelty; for the theistic sects had already recognised that men of all classes could, by means of *bhakti*, press on to spiritual religion and salvation; but Rāmānanda seems to have gone a little farther. "In this extended freedom we see evidence of Muslim influence."[186] Some writers are specially emphatic on this point. Thus Macauliffe asserts, "It is certain that Rāmānanda came in contact at Banaras with learned Musalmāns, ..." The same author further suggests that it was natural to suppose that there should have been held in Banares heated discussions between "Mullās and Brāhmans, and that the better informed classes of Hindus, who had already shown a predilection for monotheism, should have formed a just conception of the divine unity."[187] That is Monotheism of Islām.

However, we are lacking in the names of those individual Ṣūfīs who had direct contacts with Rāmānanda. This may be attributed to the paucity of recorded information, the problem we are faced with in reconstructing a linked account of those medieval saints of India. But the general atmosphere engendered by the presence of a large number of Muslims in Banares even before the permanent establishment of Muslim rule in India, on the one hand, and the vigorous missionary work carried out by the Ṣūfīs in north India, especially beginning from the thirteenth century onward, on the other, may have inspired the

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185. "Rāmānandis, etc.", p. 570.
186. RLI, p. 325.
187. *Op. cit.*, p. 102.

spiritual instinct of divinely persons of India like Rāmānanda. This contention is corroborated by a noted scholar, Kshitimohan Sen. He says that during the middle ages the land of India was filled with spirit of love (*prema*) and devotion (*bhakti*) when Islām's political power and its spiritual culture appeared in the land. The political power of Islām, together with its "aggressive monotheism and staunch faith, brought awakening to the indigenous natural love and devotion and the monotheism that already existed in the land from a hoary antiquity."[188]

Howsoever Rāmānanda may have imbibed Ṣūfī influence, it will be incorrect to assert that he gave up caste distinctions altogether. It has been indicated before that Rāmānanda was a bridge between the *bhakti* movements of the South and the North. He was one of the products of that age when the interaction of Hindu and Muslim ideas produced a spiritual fermentation. As a result, he, like many other *bhaktas* and Ṣūfīs, adopted a more liberal attitude towards the problem of religion. They recognised both religions as in some sense legitimate; and consequent to this, allowed some relaxation in matters of religion. Otherwise, as an orthodox Brāhman, Rāmānanda does not seem to have rejected the priestly class which monopolises Hindu religion; and also there is no evidence that he has made any attempt to overturn the caste system as a religiously institutionalised social phenomenon.[189] He adopted a strong monotheism, in that he worshipped Rāma, the son of King Daśaratha, who is regarded as an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Besides the worship of incarnation, he is also said to have allowed idolatry freely. Thus it may be concluded that Rāmānanda did not make a complete departure from the old Hindu tradition though under Ṣūfī influence he developed a strong sense of monotheism, equality of all and a general liberal attitude in matters of religion. In any case, before Kabīr, undoubtedly Rāmānanda was one of the great *bhaktas* whose ideas were moulded by the interaction of Hindu-Muslim ideas through

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188. MMI, 3-4; also see 'The Medieval Mystics of North India,' in CHIB, VI, 387.

189. Cf. RLI, 325.

bhakti mysticism. The case of Kabīr, however, was different. Unlike all *bhaktas* and *sādhakas*, with the exception of Nānak, he effected a partial break with both Hinduism and Islām, not just for the sake of breaking with, but to achieve a noble purpose of uniting the two rival communities. There is a popular saying : "Bhakti arose first in the Dravida land; Rāmānanda brought it to the North, and Kabīr spread it to the seven continents and nine divisions of the world."[190] Then, let us now turn to Kabīr, the *bhakta*.

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190. Sen, in CHIB, VI, 387.

CHAPTER IV

The Life of Kabir

SINCE there seems to be some uncertainty and confusion about Kabīr's life and work, it is deemed necessary to deal at first with the nature of the materials that we have at our disposal pertaining to Kabīr. The necessity arises from the fact that the legendary accounts of Kabīr are so mixed up with the facts that often it is not even easy to disentangle from them the true story of his life. Yet we have to make the attempt to unearth the man and his significance. In order to do so, we have to explain the nature of the information that we have derived from different sources — their historicity or authenticity. When we can do so, we shall be able to form an idea for understanding Kabīr and his teachings from a reasonably historical perspective.

THE SOURCES

There is a general dearth of information about Kabīr, partly because he himself, being an unlettered person, left nothing in written form. All sources agree that Kabīr was an unlettered person and that his teaching was mainly oral. In this regard, Kabīr himself is reported to have said:

I am not skilled in book knowledge,
nor do I understand controversy (*Ādi-Granth*, *Bilāvalu* 2).

He says further:

I touch not ink nor paper,
nor take pen in my hand ;
of the greatness of the four ages
Kabīr has given instructions
with his lips (*Bījak*, *Sākhi* 188).

The circumstances of Kabīr's upbringing make it quite probable that he was unable to read and write. However, there is a collection of his sayings called *Bījak*. But the compilation of this book was not made until about fifty years

after his death.[1] J. N. Farquhar specifically mentions the year 1570 when the vast number of Kabīr's poems and utterances were compiled by one of his disciples.[2] F. E. Keay goes into further details and says that since it was unlikely that Kabīr could read and write, his admirers and followers treasured his poems and repeated them to one another, and perhaps in some cases wrote them down. When the Kabīrpanth was definitely organised, the need for an authentic scripture was felt, and thus steps were taken to collect Kabīr's verses together. This collection is known as the *Bijak*. The compiler may have been Bhagavān Dās, and the compilation was not made till somewhere about 1600.[3] Some hold that Kabīr dictated his sayings to his disciple, Bhagavān Dās.[4]

(A) The *Bijak* (Account Book or Invoice[5]) is accepted as the most authoritative record of Kabīr's teaching. The language of the *Bījak* is said to be that of Hindi dialect which was spoken in the neighbourhood of Banares, Mirzāpur and Gorakhpur.[6] But it contains more than 235 words of Persian,

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1. See R. Burn, "Kabir, Kabirpanthis", ERE, VII, 633; Also cf. Westcott, G. H., KKP, 28.
2. Cf. ORLI, 333.
3. See *Kabīr and his Followers*, RLIKF, 56.
4. Cf. Majumdar, R. C. (ed.), HCIP, VI. 555.
5. The word *Bījak* means : (1) essence or seed, (2) an invoice, and (3) a key to a hidden treasure or a document by which a hidden treasure can be located. It is the third meaning which is probable here. It is said that in the neighbourhood of Banares, there is a group of people who are in the habit of burying treasure for safety, and the place of concealment is remembered by the secret sign of a chart which is called *bījak*. This custom may have been in vague elsewhere. For sure, it is still (prevalent among) the fishermen of Bangladesh. It was evident in the film called *Jāgo Huwā Saverā*, an academic-award-winner-film, depicting the life of fishermen of the then East Pakistan. Kabir seems to have been familiar with the name *bījak*, and the compiler of his sayings probably found this name as a suitable title for his (Kabir's) verses which were considered to reveal the hidden treasures of religious knowledge. There is a verse which says:

   The *Bījak* tells the secret of that treasure which is hidden; the word tells of *jīva* (soul or life); few are they who understand (*Bījak*, *Ramaiṇī* 37).

6. According to Aḥmad Shāh of Kanpur, Hindi of the *Bījak* is the dialect spoken in the neighbourhood of Banares, Mirzāpur and Gorakhpur. But G.A. Grierson maintains that the language of Banares, Gorakhpur and East Mirzāpur is one form or another of the Bhojpuri dialect of Bihari, and that

Arabic and Turkish origin.[7] Undoubtedly, these words found their way into Kabīr's language due to the interaction between Hindus and Muslims. The language of the *Bijak* is described as obscure and in many places it is unintelligible and difficult to interpret. About his language, Kabīr is reported to have said:

My speech is of the East;
no one can understand me.
Only he can understand me,
who is from the farthest East (*Bijak*, *Sākhī* 194).

"Colloquialism, idiomatic and elliptical structure of sentences", says Keay, "and frequent play on words increase the difficulty."[8] Scholars find no grammatical accuracy in his language. According to modern standards of language, his style is unpolished. Kabīr, however, was aware of the usefulness of his vernacular. Aḥmad Shāh quotes a saying of Kabīr that "Sanskrit is like the water of a well, while the *bhāshā* (the vernacular) is like the flowing waters of a river."[9] The use of the vernacular, instead of Sanskrit, for religious teaching, made it possible to popularise religion in Hindi-speaking regions. For doing so, Kabīr is regarded as the father and pioneer of Hindi literature. There is probably no Indian author, it is argued, whose verses are more on the lips of the people of North India than those of Kabīr, unless it be Tulsī Dās. As G.A. Grierson says, "The words of two men of the past can still be heard in every village of Hindustān. Those are Tulsī Dās, the abandoned child of a beggar Brāhman tribe, and Kabīr, the despised weaver of Benares."[10]

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there is not a single form typical of this language in the *Bījak* (see J. Beames, "Notes on the Bhojpuri Dialect of Hindi Spoken in Western Bihar", JRAS, N. S. III (1868), 483-508). Keay says that the language is really old Awadhī, a dialect of Eastern Hindi used in West Mirzāpur, Allahābād and Awadh, and similar to that used by Tulsī Dās in his famous *Rāmacaritmānas* (see Keay p. 51).

7. Cf. *The Bījak of Kabīr*, tr. Aḥmad Shāh, Hamirpur (U. P.), 1917, p. 30 referred to by Carpenter, J. E., *Theism in Medieval India*, London, 1926, extracts reproduced in Westcott, p. 117; also see Tara Chand, IIIC, 153 Keay, p. 51.

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*, 52.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 67. For Kabīr's contributions to Hindi literature and his place therein, see Keay, pp. 63-67; also see G. A. Grierson, "Tulsī Dās: Poet and Religious Reformer", JRAS, N. S., XXXV (1903), 447-66.

The hymns of the *Bijak* are written in a great variety of metres previously unknown, of which Kabīr is regarded as the inventor. Therefore, the *Bijak* consists of the following divisions according to different metres :

(1) *The Ādi-Maṅgal* (a short introductory poem);

(2) *Ramainis* (short doctrinal poems consisting of an indefinite number of *Chaupāīs*);[11]

(3) *Sākhis* (evidence or rhyming couplets bearing witness to the truth: short apophthegms consisting of a single couplet);

(4) *Śabdas* (words: of the same character as the *Ramainis* but in the *lalita* metre);

(5) *The Cauntisī* (or the 34 consonants of the Nāgarī alphabet, with their religious significations);

(6) *The Vipramatisi* (an attack, in thirty short verses, on the orthodox religious system of the Brāhmans);

(7) *Kaharās, Basantas, Chānchāris, Belīs, Birhūlis* and *Hiṇḍolās* (all religious songs in various metres);

(8) *The Sāyar Bijak Ko Pad* (summing up of the whole *Bījak*).

The *Bijak* ends with the following verse :

Kabīr said, Within the Creator is all,
and the Creator permeates all:
Without the secret all are sunk in error;
only the holy man, the wise, can comprehend.[12]

But the *Ramainis*, the *Sākhis* and the *Śabdas* form the bulk of the *Bījak*.

There are several printed editions of the *Bijak*. The two best known editions are both supplied with a commentary, the one by Mahārājah Biswanāth Singh, the Rājāh of Rewāh, and the other by Bābā Pūran Dās of Burhānpur. The former has been printed at Banares (1868), Lucknow and Bombay, and also without the commentary at Gaya (n. d.); the latter at Lucknow and Allahābād (1905).

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11. *Caupāīs* : a verse of four lines in a particular metre.
12. Quoted in Keay, p. 53.

In 1890, the Rev. Prem Chand of the Baptist Mission, Monghyr, printed an edition at Calcutta. The editor of this edition writes :

> Some thirty years ago I was lent a manuscript copy of the Bījak, taken from the Murshidābād edition. This I had copied out and afterwards compared my copy with others from different parts of the country. I found in these a certain number of *Dohās* (couplets) which were not in my copy and these I have printed at the end of the book. The other poetical pieces were the same in all editions. I corrected various clerical errors and separated words which had been allowed to run into one another and added a few footnotes to make the meaning clear to any ordinary Hindi scholar.[13]

In other words, in this edition the order of the verses is different from that of other editions.

In 1911 the Rev. Aḥmad Shāh of Kānpur published a text which follows the order of the edition made by the Rājāh of Rewāh, but the verses not found in this but found in other editions have been added at the end.[14] There may be other editions in existence and many manuscripts. If there are any old manuscripts at the disposal of the Kabīrpanthīs, they are not available to modern scholars for examination. Thus the Kabīrpanthīs, the upholders of the tradition, prevent modern scholarship from digging farther to unearth more information about Kabīr. However, as we can see, all the printed editions of the *Bījak* are modern. The variations among the different editions suggest the argument that all verses of the *Bijak* are not the original words of Kabīr. There have been accretions and additions made by different hands. In the *Sākhīs* the greatest amount of variation seems to occur. A very large number of *Sākhīs* have been collected by the Kabīrpanthīs. Although they are ascribed to Kabīr, they are not found in the *Bijak*.[15] Keay has drawn a chart show-

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13. Cited by Westcott, p. 49. This edition contains 83 *Ramaiṇīs*, 113 *Śabdas*, 33 hymns of various kinds and 364 *Sākhīs*. To these have been added 60 *Sākhīs* found in other editions.

14. See Keay, p. 53. This edition has 115 *Śabdas*, 445 *Sākhīs*, 83 *Ramaiṇīs*, and 31 poems of various kinds (see Westcott, pp. 48-49).

15. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 51; Keay, p. 55.

ing the discrepancy among various editions of the *Bījak*.[16] At any rate, "On the whole", asserts Keay, "it seems likely that the bulk of it [*Bijak*] is his [Kabīr's] work. There is, generally speaking, a consistency about the style and ideas which seems to show it to be the work of one man."[17] Of the two well-known editions, the text of Pūrān Dās is recognised by the Kabīr-panthīs of Kabīr Chaura, Banares; while that of the Rājāh of Rewāh is accepted by the section of the Panth at Chhattisgarh.[18] According to some Kabīrpanthīs, the *Bijak* was given to the royal family of Rewāh by Kabīr himself, and that they have a manuscript written out by Dharam Dās in 1469. But on investigations made by Keay from the officials of that State, no information could be obtained about it.

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16. The variations in the number of verses included may be seen at a glance in the following table:

Rājāh of Rewāh 1868	*Prem Chand* 1890	*Pūran Dās* 1905	*Aḥmad Shāh* 1911
Ādi Maṅgal			Ādi Maṅgal
—	—	Pritham	—
—	—	Anusār	
84 Ramaiṇis	84 Ramaiṇis	84 Ramaiṇis	—
—	113 Śabdas	115 Śabdas	115 Śabdas
—	Chauntīsi	Chauntīsi	Chauntīsi
—	Vipramatīsi	Vipramatīsi	Vipramatīsi
12 Kaharās	2 Chānchāris	12 Kaharās	12 Kaharās
12 Basants	Birhuli	12 Basants	12 Basants
Chauntīsi	2 Belis	2 Chānchāris	2 Chānchāris
2 Belis	3 Hiṇḍolās	2 Belis	2 Belis
2 Chānchāris	12 Kaharās	Birhūli	Birhūli
3 Hiṇḍolās	12 Basants	3 Hiṇḍolās	3 Hiṇḍolās
Birhūli	364 Sākhis	353 Śākhis	445 Śākhis
383 Sākhis	60 Supplementary Sākhis		Sāyar Bijak ko Pad

(cf. Keay, p. 54).

17. *Op. cit.*, p. 56. No copies of the *Bījak* are now available.

18. In these two recensions the first two *Ramaiṇīs* are differently placed. According to a tradition, there were two devoted disciples of Kabīr named Jaggo Dās and Bhaggo Dās. Before his death, Kabīr wrote his *Bījak* and gave it to their mother to be preserved. After Kabīr's death, the brothers quarrelled about it, and each wanted to have the *Bījak* to himself. In order to reconcile them, their mother said that each should have the *Bījak* with this difference; one should begin with the words : *Jīva rūp* (*Ramaiṇī* 1 in Aḥmad Shāh's edition) and the other with *Antar Jyoti* (*Ramaiṇī* 2) (see Keay, p. 55).

(B) The second most important source of information is the Sikh scripture, namely, the *Ādi-Granth*,[19] compiled in 1604 by the orders of Guru Arjun Dev (d. 1606), the fifth Guru of Sikhism. The *Granth* contains, in addition to the compositions of the Sikh Gurus, beginning from Nānak up to Tegh or Tej Bahādur, the ninth Guru (d. 1675),[20] poems of other *bhaktas*, who, coming just before Nānak, paved the way for him. Of these *bhaktas*, whom Nānak, acknowledged as his spiritual precursors and whose hymns are included in his *Granth*, Nāmdev and Kabīr are the outstanding. We have already seen the place given to Nāmdeṿ in the *Granth*. The hymns of Kabīr, with the exception of those of the Sikh Gurus, are the greatest in bulk. It is the preponderance that has been given to Kabīr's poems in the *Ādi Granth*, and the respect and the interest that Nānak has shown to Kabīr, that has led writers like Westcott to suggest that the former probably enjoyed personal intercourse with the latter.[21]

The *Ādi Granth* is in three parts, the first of which is liturgical, while the second contains the general body of the hymns, and the third part is supplementary. It is in the last two portions that the verses of Kabīr are found.

In the last part of the *Ādi Granth*, which is called the *Bhog*, there are 244 *Sākhīs* of Kabīr. Altogether, according to F. Pincott, there are 1,146 stanzas of Kabīr to be found in the *Granth*.[22] The number of stanzas is about two-thirds of the number to be found in the *Bījak*, calculates Keay.[23] The incorporation of such a large number of Kabīr's poems in the

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19. "*Ādi*" means "The first", and "Granth" means "Book". It is called *Ādi-Granth* (First Book) to distinguish it from the *Granth* of the tenth Guru, Govind Singh, which was compiled at a later date (see H. A. Rose, "Granth", ERE, VI, 389-90).

20. For the ten Gurus of Sikhism and its brief history, see H. A. Rose, "Sikhs", ERE, XI, 507-11, esp. 507-08; also see Brigadier General Malcolm, "Sketch of the Sikhs", AR, XI (1810), 197-292.

21. See *Op. cit.*, p. 2.

22. Cf. "The Arrangement of the Hymns of the Ādi Granth", JRAS, N.S., XVIII (1886), 437-61.

23. *Op. cit.*, p. 58; also see Archer, J. C., *The Sikhs*, 53.

Granth Sāḥīb, contends R. C. Majumdar, is seen as an evidence of *Bijak's* authenticity.[24]

We have already discussed the relation between Kabīr and Nānak in a previous chapter. It is very important to consider what connection there is between these two collections of the poems of Kabīr. Keay informs us that the verses in the *Granth* are not considered so authoritative as those in the *Bījak* by the members of the Kabīrpanth; and the Kabīrpanthīs who sit at the Kabīr Gate of the Sikh Golden Temple at Amritsar (East Punjāb), only recite the *Bijak*. The same writer also tells us that some time ago Aḥmad Shāh expressed the opinion that these poems in the *Granth* were "in the spirit of Kabīr", rather than by Kabīr himself. But, later on he revised his opinion and said that they have the same marks of genuineness as the poems of the *Bijak*.[25] It is interesting to notice, observes Keay, that, on the whole, the poems of the *Granth* probably contain more information about the personal life of Kabīr than the poems of the *Bijak*.[26] For example, in the translation of the *Ādi Granth* by M. A. Macauliffe, there are elaborate verses pertaining to the circumstances of the birth of Kabīr, and the punishment he has suffered at the hands of Sultān Sikandar Lūdhi of Delhi.[27] Moreover, the *Granth* contains fewer poems with an advanced cosmogony, and more poems which speak of Kabīr's personal experiences. According to Keay, in the "Kabīr portions" of the *Granth* (apart from a few brief sayings and couplets) there are only about two verses which do not contain the name Kabīr whereas in the *Bijak* there are about fifty-one such verses.[28]

There are very few verses of Kabīr which are found both in the *Bijak* and the *Ādi Granth*; but the following verses of the two collections may be compared even though they are not quite identical :

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24. Cf. HCIP, VI, 563, also see Westcott, pp. 28, 48.
25. See *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.
26. Cf. *Ibid.*
27. See SR, VI, 124, 132-33; also see E. Trumpp. "Specimen of a Translation of the Ādi Granth', JRAS, N. S., V (1871), 197-218.
28. Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 59.

Bījak		*Ādi Granth*
(1) *Ramaiṇi* 33	with	*Gaurī* 30
(2) *Śabda* 73	,,	*Soraṭha* 2
(3) ,, 112	,,	*Gauri* 42
(4) ,, 97	,,	*Prabhāti* 2
(5) *Chānchārī* 2	,,	*Gaurī* 75
(6) *Chauntīsī*	,,	*Gaurī Pūrbī-Bāvanakhrī.*

The *ślokas* (verses) of the *Granth* are of the same form as the *sākhīs* of the *Bijak*, but there are only a few which are common to both. It is indeed very interesting to find so few poems which occur identically in both collections. Yet the spirit of the two collections is the same. And there seems no reason to doubt that they both contain a large majority of poems which are the genuine words of Kabīr, though both the collections include some verses which have probably been spoken by others in the name of Kabīr. In some cases, for instance, Macauliffe passes on a tradition that a poem here and there was composed by one of the Sikh Gurus on a theme of Kabīr's (e. g. *Bhairau* 2), and this may have been the case with other verses where such a tradition has not been preserved.[29]

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29. See *ibid.*, p. 60. There are other poems which are said to have been uttered by other persons who addressed them to Kabīr, e.g. *Gaurī* 18; *Gujarī* 2; *Bilāvalu* 4; *Gaund* 1 and 5. *Āsā* 33, which refers to Kabīr's wife, is said to be partly by his mother. There may be other verses in this connection. *Āsā* 13 appears to be an eulogium on Kṛṣṇa; the opening lines being:

My pilgrimage is to the bank of the Gomti,
Where dwelleth the yellow-robed priest.

This poem, with such words in it as "with my rosary on my neck" cannot probably be attributed to Kabīr, for he denounced the efficacy of pilgrimage and use of rosary. Again, for instance, *Gauṇd* 4 and *Bhairau* 8 refer to the miraculous escapes of Kabīr from drowning in the Ganges, and from being trodden down by a wild elephant when he was punished by Sikandar Lūdhī. They are probably not genuine poems of Kabīr, for he does not seem to have had any fascination for working miracles. These poems have probably been composed by those disciples of Kabīr who themselves believed in miracles, and by composing poems in the name of Kabīr, they wanted to glorify his spiritual achievements. Furthermore, *Basantu* 4 is full of mythology, and the Supreme Being is spoken of as becoming incarnate. This poem is perhaps not by Kabīr, because he clearly denounced the concept of incarnation.

At any rate, how are we to reconcile the discrepancies in the two collections of the *Bijak* and the *Ādi Granth ?* Whatever variations are found between the two collections may be accounted for by the fact that Kabīr gave his teaching orally in Banares, and that certain of his disciples carried them away in their memories. When his followers split up into groups, and organised themselves into sects, they prepared their respective collections without any coordination between them. One of these groups, sometimes called the western group, or some individual disciples of Kabīr, must have met Nānak, if he himself did not meet Kabīr, from whom most probably by oral communication Nānak incorporated in his sayings those of Kabīr. In other words, it may be argued that "there were probably two principal oral traditions; one in the East, which became the nucleus of the *Bijak*, and the other in the North-west, which was the nucleus of the collection incorporated in the *Granth*."[30]

Besides these two main collections, there are innumerable *sākhis* and witty sayings which are currently ascribed to Kabīr. Keay informs us that there are as many as five thousand couplets current in India; whereas the *Bijak* only contains about four hundred. Although these *sākhis* are strikingly similar to those in the *Bijak*, and are used like poverbs, "it is not at all likely", remarks Keay, "that all of them are really the work of Kabīr. Most of them are however in his spirit, and in substance consistent with the teaching to be met with in the *Bijak* and the *Granth*."[31]

The Kabīrpanthīs also have a considerable literature, much of which, they claim, came from their preceptor. Of these, Macauliffe mentions a few, such as *Kabir Kasauti* (Bombay, 1885); the *Bharat Khanda cha Aravachim Kosh* and the *Bhakta Vijaya*.[32] In the bibliography of his book, *Makers of Indian Literature*: *Kabir*, Prabhakar Machwe has given a long list of books written by the Kabīrpanthīs in Hindi, Marathi and

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30. Keay, p. 61.
31. *Ibid.*
32. See *op. cit.*, n. 3, pp. 122-23.

Gujarati.[33] These works are of as late as the nineteenth century, and thus can hardly be accepted as containing the authentic words of Kabīr.[34]

(C) In addition to these works attributed to Kabīr, there is a book by Rabindranāth Tagore, entitled *One Hundred Poems of Kabir* with an introduction by Evelyn Underhill. This translation is supposed to be based upon the Hindi text (in Bengali characters) with a Bengali translation by Kshiti Mohan Sen, who has gathered from many sources a large collection of poems and hymns to which the name of Kabīr is attached.[35] The genuineness of all the hundred poems in Tagore's translation has been doubted by Aḥmad Shāh and Farquhar; the latter says, "Tagore's beautiful renderings scarcely reflect the style of the original, though they are not unfaithful as translation."[36] However, we may postpone our comments until we consider a few important points: (1) None of the hundred poems is found either in the *Bijak* or in the *Granth* with the exception of poems 1 and 69, even though they are only extracts from the poems found in those two collections.[37] In some of the poems there are lines or phrases here and there which came from those two collections, but the remainder of the collection is probably of later date. (2) Of the hundred poems, the contents of many are quite contrary to what we know of Kabīr's habits and teachings as found in his authentic poems (cf. nos. 29, 57, 62, 64, 75, 82). They present Kabīr as practising Hindu rites, e.g. asceticism, and accepting Hindu religious things, e.g. the Vedas, the Purāṇas, the holy rivers, etc., against which he, in fact, raised his strongest voice. (3) In these poems, for God the terms are Brahma, Supreme Soul, Supreme Spirit, Unconditioned, Thatness, Śūnyatā, etc. (cf. 7, 13, 14, 19, 39, 40,

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33. New Delhi, 1968, pp. 57-59.

34. Cf. ORLI, p. 334.

35. Kshiti Mohan Sen's translation is in four volumes and contains 341 poems. The hundred poems translated by Tagore are taken from the first three volumes, which contain 264 poems (cf. Keay, p. 62).

36. *Op. cit.*, p. 333; Keay, p. 62.

37. Poems 1 and 69 can be compared partly with *Ādi-Granth, Prabhātī*, 2; and *Bījak, Śabda* 43, 48, 62.

45, 56, 76, 80), but there are no occurrences of Rāma which is the name Kabīr usually uses for God. (4) All Hindu gods and goddesses are recognised (cf. no. 15). (5) Creation is caused by the OM, and by the dancing sport of the Creator (cf. nos. 26, 82). (6) Poems 46 and 81 describe an advanced cosmogony with five elements which corresponds to that of the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*. (7) In poems 30 and 47 man is compared to a tree in which there are two birds—one is the Guru and the other is the disciple, i.e., the Universal Self and the individual self. Obviously, these ideas have been borrowed from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. (8) Poem 27 describes many miracles which Kabīr is believed to have shown. (9) There are many poems which express highly mystical, especially Ṣūfīstic abstractions (cf. 4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 22). (10) In some poems the theme of Kṛṣṇa's playing of the flute is expressed (cf. 50, 53, 68). (11) Poem 91 presents Kabīr as one who has learned the Sanskrit language. This, of course, goes against the fundamental truth about Kabīr, for he had nothing to do with the holy language of the orthodox Hinduism. (12) The hundred poems contain many Hindu-Buddhist philosophical ideas which Kabīr can hardly be credited with, for philosophy was not his primary accomplishment.

In view of these facts, it may not be incorrect to hold that the original Hindi text of which Tagore's hundred poems is a translation is probably not a collection of authentic poems of Kabīr, except for some lines and phrases. The poems seem to have been contributed by different persons, some Vedāntists, some Ṣūfīs, some orthodox Kṛṣṇite Hindus. The collection as a whole does represent the spirit of Kabīr's teaching, though it is moulded in a philosophical fashion. As to the use of the name of Kabīr in these apocryphal poems, we should not be surprised, for the names of revered persons, like Kabīr and Nānak, have frequently been used by those who profess their systems. It is a universal phenomenon. Nānak's name, for example, was used in all the compositions of the Gurus in the Sikh *Granth* down to Guru Arjun. The use of the name of a great teacher, as we know, is not to be taken as forgery, but rather as showing respect, and for authenticating later writings.

(D) Apart from these collections, we have some valuable information in the *National Biography Series* of India. The compiler of this work is Dr. Pārasnāth Tiwārī, who has done a great deal of research work about the life of Kabīr. Dr. Tiwārī's work is a critical exposition of Kabīr's life as gleaned from different sources and the current legends.[38]

(E) In addition to these works, there are numerous other references to Kabīr. All traditions and all Kabīrpanthīs are in full agreement on one point—that Kabīr was brought up by a Muslim weaver. In the *Ādi-Granth* occur these lines : "By caste a weaver and patient of mind; utters Kabir with natural ease the excellencies of Rāmá."[39]

A Muslim historian, named Muḥsin Fānī of Kashmir, who lived during the reign of Akbar (1556-1605), in his *Dabistān-i Madhāhib* describes Kabīr as a weaver and a *muwwāḥid* (believer in the unity of God). It is further stated that in his quest for guidance, he visited Muslim as well as Hindu saints of his time, and finally became a disciple of Rāmānanda. Mention is also made of the following story :

> One day when certain Brāhmans were expatiating on the purifying qualities of the Ganges water, Kabīr filled his wooden cup with water from the river and offered it to them to drink. They were horrified at the thought of drinking out of the cup belonging to a low caste man; upon which Kabīr remarked, 'If the Ganges water cannot purify my cup, how can I believe that it can wash away my desire'.[40]

There are verses both in the *Bijak* and *Ādi-Granth* which describe Kabīr's rejection of the efficacy of the holy waters. On the strength of these we can say that the above story is not a mere legend, but a part of his teaching.

However, the statement that Kabīr was a weaver and a believer in the unity of God has been confirmed by Akbar's court historian, Abu'l Faḍl, and has never been contradicted by any.[41]

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38. *Kabīr*, tr. J. P. Uniyal, New Delhi, 1967, pp. 1-48.
39. Cited in Westcott, p. 3.
40. Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 23. *Dabistān-i-Madhāhib*, Calcutta, 1809, pp.246-48, tr. D. Shea and A. Troyer, Paris, 1843, II, 186-91.
41. Cf. Westcott, p. 23.

It is interesting to note the opinion of the Ṣūfīs of Kabīr's time. Shaykh 'Abdul Ḥaqq Dihlawī records the answer of his own grandfather, who was a learned Ṣūfī, to the query of one of his sons as to whether Kabīr who was a believer in the unity of God (*muwwaḥid*) should be regarded as a Muslim or an unbeliever, that "it is a secret difficult to comprehend. One should try to understand."[42]

The significance of the above statement is that it has not said anything positively or negatively. Kabīr was a *muwwaḥid* which has been established. Secondly, the statement implies that one finds it difficult to categorise Kabīr with this group or that group. This is exactly our position. From any particular point of view—Hindu or Muslim—Kabīr cannot be accepted totally. It was part of his mission to remain above and beyond denominations, and thus he hoped to bring the two communities together.

In the Muslim hagiographical literature Kabīr's name is not mentioned very frequently. But according to the popular *Tadhkirah-'i-Awliyā-'i-Hind* (Description of the Lives of Indian Muslim Saints), Kabīr was a disciple of Shaykh Taqī, a renowned Ṣūfī of Banares and North India.[43]

The *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islām* describes Kabīr as an Indian mystic of the fifteenth century, who was claimed both by the Hindus and Muslims as belonging to their faith. A large collection of Hindi verses is attributed to him, but their authenticity is doubtful, and a like uncertainty attaches to his biography, which is obscured by legends. He is said to have been the son, or adopted son, of a Muhammadan weaver, and to have become the disciple of Rāmānanda. Kabīr joined in the theological and philosophical arguments that his master held with Brāhmans and Ṣūfīs at Banares. Kabīr appears to have earned his living as a weaver, and to have been a married man, the father of a family, "and to have been as contemptuous of the professional asceticism of the Yogī as he was disregardful of the doctrines and ordinances of

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42. Quoted by 'Azīz Aḥmad, SICIE, 147 referred to *Akhbār-ul-Akhyār*, Delhi, 1309/1889, p. 343.

43. Referred to by Ikrām, S.M., MCI, 126.

orthodoxy, whether Hindu or Muslim."[44] The boldness with which he sang his mystical doctrine of the divine unity exposed him to persecution, and he is said to have been driven from Banares in 1495, when he was about 60 years of age, and to have died at Maghar, in the district of Basti, in 1518. Legend says that his Hindu and Muslim disciples disputed as to the disposal of his body, which the former wished to burn and the latter to bury: when they lifted the cloth that covered the body, they found in place of the corpse only a heap of flowers; of these the Hindus burnt half in Banares, while the Muslims buried the rest at Maghar, where the shrine is still in the charge of Muhammadan Kabīrpanthīs.[45] The *Encyclopaedia* further says that a study of his poems makes it clear that he had no desire to attach himself to any organised religion. "Saith Kabīr, they are good riders who keep themselves aloof from the Vedas and the Ḳur'ān". He did not attempt to formulate any religious philosophical system of his own, but he popularised the *bhakti* religion, without, however, connecting it with any particular incarnation, and he spoke of God indifferently as "Rām, Harī, 'Ali or Allāh." He rejected the outward signs of Hinduism, e.g. the sacred thread, the distinctions of caste, the ritual observances of temple worship, etc., and his references to Muslim authorities and institutions (e.g. the Qur'ān, circumcision, pilgrimage, the Mulla, the Qāḍi, etc.) are accompanied with a denial of their validity. He represented God as the omnipresent reality. But the human soul could attain union with God through love, not by knowledge or by ceremonial observances. His doctrines were accepted by many of whom the unlettered persons formed the majority."[46]

Mawlawī Ghulām Sarwar in his *Khazīnat-ul-Āṣfiyā* (Treasury of Saints) writes that Shaykh Kabīr *Ǧulāhā* (weaver), the disciple and successor of Shaykh Taqī, is described as being one of the great men of his time, and a leader among theists. He is described as the author of many Hindi writings, which shows that he was a man of great learning. He taught the Ṣūfi doctrine

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44. T.W. Arnold, "Kabīr", SEI, p. 198.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
46. Cf. *ibid.*

of *waṣāl* (union with God) and remained silent with regard to *firāq* (separation). He is said to have been the first to write about God and His attributes in Hindi, and to have been the author of many poems in Hindi. Because of his wide religious toleration, he was accepted as a religious leader by both the Muslims and the Hindus, and designated by the former *Pīr* Kabīr and by the latter Bhagat Kabīr. He died in 1594.[47] (We will deal with the date of Kabīr later, p. 165)

Among the Hindus, Nābhājī is the earliest to write about Kabīr. An important statement is found in his *Bhakta Mālā* (*ca.* 1600). He says:

> Kabīr refused to acknowledge caste distinction or to recognize the authority of the six schools of Hindu philosophy, nor did he set any store by the four divisions of life (*Ashramas*) prescribed for Brāhmins. He held that religion without Bhakti was no religion at all and that asceticism, fasting and almsgiving had no value if unaccompanied by worship (*Bhajan*, hymns singing). By means of Ramainīs, Shabdas, and Sākhīs, he imparted religious instruction to Hindu and Muslim alike. He had no preference for either religion, but gave teaching that was appreciated by the followers of both. He spoke out his mind fearlessly and never made it his object merely to please his hearers.[48]

This statement is one of the best depictions available of Kabīr's life and mission. The account clearly tells us of a man who had no great sympathy with Brāhmanical teaching; he believed in a personal God and in salvation by *bhakti* rather than by performing ceremonial rites; and he delivered a message, regarded as God's message, to Hindus and Muslims alike. In short, the account of Nābhājī is an independent presentation of the central core of Kabīr's life and teaching.

This is all that is stated in the above text, but to this text is appended a commentary written by a later hand.[49] In this

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47. Cited in Westcott, p. 23. *Khazīnat-ul-Āṣfiyā*, published in Lahore in 1868.

48. Quoted in Westcott, pp. 18-19; also see Tara Chand, pp. 149-50 cited from Sitaram Saran Bhagwan Prasad, *Bhakta Mālā*, p. 465.

49. According to one account, Nābhājī wrote his account of the *bhaktas* in Sanskrit and asked his disciple, Priya Dās, to provide it with a commentary.

commentary it is stated that Kabīr in his desire to wear a *khanti* round his neck and a *tilak* on his forehead (apparently to attract a Hindu audience) made up his mind to become a disciple of Rāmānanda and achieved his purpose. The commentary tells us that Muslims objected to the repetition of "Rām, Rām", by a co-religionist and asked Rāmānanda whether it were true that he had received a *julāhā* as his disciple. Rāmānanda at first denied that he had done so, but when confronted with Kabīr acknowledged his mistake.

In the same commentary mention is made of the incident in which Kabīr was charged before the Sulṭān Sikandar Lūdhī, and refused to salute the Sulṭān, and was sentenced to death and in succession was thrown into the Ganges, committed to the flames, and exposed to the fury of an elephant, but all to no purpose. It is added that the Sulṭān, thwarted in his desire to destroy Kabīr, recognised that he had acted wrongly, asked Kabīr's forgiveness, and offered to compensate him for the injuries inflicted.[50]

It is apparent that the commentator of Nābhājī was familiar with all the popular legends that were current in the society in those days. It is not impossible that Nābhājī himself was also acquainted with those legends. The only thing we do not know is when these legends came into being. These legends gradually came to be known and were incorporated into various writings of later dates, and were accepted as authoritative and historical by the Kabīrpanthīs.

(F) Having recorded some medieval opinions about Kabīr, we propose to take into consideration a few modern views on Kabīr. The examination of some modern opinions about Kabīr, like those of medieval times, will help us to form our idea about the man and his ideals. It is deemed necessary, for any saying or sayings attributed to Kabīr, which do not tally with these opinions, may be regarded as apocryphal.

Priya made a beginning and then handed over the MS to Gobardhan Nāth. Finally, the commentary was completed by Nārāin Dās, a disciple of Gobardhan Nāth, and published in 1769 (see Westcott, p. 19).

50. *Ibid*; also see Tiwārī, pp. 19-23.

The obscurity of Kabīr's life led writers like H. H. Wilson to doubt even the historical existence of Kabīr. Thus rejecting the view of Malcolm, who regarded Kabīr as a celebrated Ṣūfi,[51] Wilson says: "Indeed I think it not at all improbable that no such person as Kabīr ever existed, and that his name is a mere cover to the innovations of some freethinker amongst the Hindus."[52] The learned author does not stop here. He goes on to say that his (Kabīr's) names are suspicious, and Jñānī (the sage), or Kabīr (the greatest), "are generic rather than individual denominations: at any rate, even if the individual were distinct, we must suppose that the name which occurs in his writings is nothing more than the *Takhalluṣ*, or assumed name, under which both Musalmān and Hindu poets have been accustomed to send their compositions into the world."[53] The learned writer, however, did not find any support for his views in the circle of modern scholarship. His contention does not appear to have been based on an adequate study of the facts about Kabīr, for the name "Kabīr" is not unique or uncommon; many people with the name "Kabir" lived in the history of India, as we shall see later. Therefore, to argue that the name was merely a title or an epithet would require explicit evidence, since there is nothing inherently unlikely in the man bearing the personal name, Kabīr.

H. H. Wilson[54] and R.G. Bhandarkar[55] are the two major scholars of our time who think Kabīr was a Hindu. It seems that the nature of Kabīr's life and teaching encouraged these scholars to regard him as a Hindu. But this view is one-sided, for it does not appear to consider the other side of his life and teaching, which is equally weighty. The central truth about his teaching is that there is no way to see him as either a Muslim or a Hindu exclusively. His up-bringing in a Muslim

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51. RSH, n. 1, p. 36; also see Barth, A., *The Religions of India*, tr. J.Wood, 4th ed., Varanasi, 1963, n. 1, p. 238 referred to H. H. Wilson, *Select Works*, I, 69.

52. RSH n. 1, p. 36.

53. *Ibid.*

54. Cf. *Essays and Lectures Chiefly on the Religion of the Hindus*, London, 1862, I, 68 ff.

55. See VSMRS. pp. 67-73.

family is one sure evidence for regarding him as a Muslim. This means, that those who consider him a Hindu do not take into consideration his life history. Moreover, Kabīr himself does not identify himself as a Muslim or as a Hindu. The only identification given by himself is that of a "weaver of Banares." It is very important to remember that any sectarian identification, one way or the other, on the part of Kabīr would have killed the very noble mission, of uniting of the Hindus and the Muslims, for which he struggled so hard. It is our intention to keep him above the sectarian level, but the fact of his Muslim name cannot be brushed aside.

There are some writers who are not willing to identify Kabīr as a Hindu or as a Muslim, but they see him only as a *bhakta*-reformer. One of them is A. B. Pandey. According to him, the *bhakti* reformers before Kabīr recognised the need of reform in the then prevailing social order but they could not or did not take the revolutionary steps of scrapping the existing social order altogether and replacing it with a new order. They were only reformers but not revolutionaries. "But Kabīr wanted to revolutionise the existing social order and social values root and branch. For this reason, Kabīr has attracted the greatest notice."[56] In the same tone, another writer remarks, "The real clue of Kabīr is, after all, not his birth or his association, but his critical, almost completely hostile, attitude toward all formalism in religion."[57]

These writers, to a great extent, actually represent the spirit of Kabīr, who seldom identified himself as a Muslim or a Hindu. His Muslim family is mentioned only accidentally.

However, there are other writers who present Kabīr as a blending of two religions—Hinduism and Islām—in his life and teaching. One of these writers is W. W. Hunter. He recognises Kabīr as a great lyrical poet and mystic. "He is also considered as the Indian Luther of the 15th century who may rightly be regarded as the creator of a sacred literature in Hindi." He and his successors endeavoured to synthesise the strict monotheism of Islām with its "abhorrence of idolatry

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56. *Early Medieval India*, Allahabad, 1960, pp. 504-05.
57. *The Sikhs*, p. 51.

with whatever was best and most deeply rooted in the creed of Hinduism." "Like Rājā Rāmmohan Roy," maintains Westcott, "he had attempted to form a composite creed out of the best elements of Hinduism and Islām."[58]

Khushwant Singh, a Sikh historian, has made a study of the history of Hindu and Muslim interaction in India during the medieval period. After the study, he concludes that in everything—dress, food, customs, speech, music—except the place of worship, the two communities became identical. "All they needed was someone who could bridge the gap between the temple and the mosque."[59] And this great task was shouldered by Kabīr.

The word "identical" in the above statement may be an oversimplification. The fact remains, however, that the interaction between the two communities took place in almost every segment of their life. Nonetheless, it may be too hazardous to say that they became identical, for neither community was ready to lose its identity as Hindu or Muslim. This sense of identity buttressed by religious separateness in the main kept the two communities far apart from each other. Kabīr's greatness lies in trying to abolish their separate identities based on religious grounds. Thus, when Kabīr says, "I am the son of both Allāh and Rāma," he specifically means to foresake religious identity. It was an insurmountable task for the two orthodox religions to give up religious identity. But Kabīr as a mystic could afford to venture it. It is this line of thinking that enabled J.N. Farquhar to say: "In the life of Kabīr the two religions mingled. The strongest elements of each laid hold of him and formed his thought, the Ṣūfī conviction that all ordinary religions are but forms dictating his general attitude to the two faiths. Hence he was persecuted from both sides."[60]

Having examined all available sources—contemporary and near contemporary—of Kabīr's life, and also some comments on his life and teaching made by writers of both the medieval and modern periods, we are now in a position to write a connected

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58. *Op. cit.*, p. 1.
59. *A History of the Sikhs*, Princeton, 1963, I, 27.
60. ORLI p. 332.

sketch of his whole life. There are a few scholars who have written on Kabīr's life and activity, as gleaned from different sources including legends. We may here summarise the account given by Dr. Evelyn Underhill in her introduction to Rabindranath Tagore's *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*.

KABIR'S LIFE SKETCH

The poet Kabīr is one of the most interesting personalities in the history of Indian mysticism. He was born in Banares "of Muslim parents" about the year 1440. In early life, he became a disciple of the celebrated Hindu ascetic Rāmānanda. Rāmānanda had brought to northern India the religious revival which Rāmānuja, the great twelfth-century reformer of Brāhmanism, had initiated in the South. (We have already discussed the relationship between Rāmānuja and Rāmānanda as far as the *bhakti* cult is concerned.)[61]

Though the elements of *bhakti* religion are indigenous in Hinduism, and find expression in many passages of the *Gītā*, there was in its medieval revival a large element of syncretism. Rāmānanda, through whom its spirit is said to have reached Kabīr, appears to have been a man of wide religious culture. and full of missionary enthusiasm. Living at the moment in which the impassioned poetry and deep philosophy of the great Persian mystics, 'Aṭṭār, Sa'dī, Jalāl-ud-Dīn Rūmī and Ḥāfiz, were exercising a powerful influence on the religious thought of India, he dreamed of reconciling this intense and personal Muslim mysticism with the traditional theology and mysticism of Brāhmanism. Some have regarded both these great religious leaders as influenced also by Christianity.[62] We may safely assert that in their teachings, two—perhaps three—apparently antagonistic streams of intense spiritual culture met, as Jewish and Hellenistic thought met in the early Christian church: and it is

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61. Cf. *supra*, pp. 104-08, 127-29.

62. See G. A. Grierson, "Modern Hinduism and its Debt to the Nestorians", JRAS, XXXIX (1907), 319, 325;....., "Bhakti-Mārga", ERE, II, 550.

one of the outstanding characteristics of Kabīr's genius that he was able in his poems to fuse them into one.[63]

A great religious reformer, it is primarily as a mystical poet that Kabīr lives for us. His fate has been that of many revealers of Reality. A hater of religious exclusivism, and seeking above all things to initiate men into the liberty of the children of God, his followers have done a disservice to his memory by re-erecting in a new place the barriers which he laboured to cast down. But his wonderful songs survive, the spontaneous expressions of his vision and his love; and it is by these, not by the didactic teachings associated with his name, that he makes his immortal appeal to the heart. In these poems a wide range of mystical emotion is brought into play: from the loftiest abstractions and the most other-worldly passion for the infinite to the most intimate and personal realisation of God, expressed in homely metaphors and religious symbols drawn indifferently from Hindu and Muslim belief. It is impossible to say of their author that he was Brāhman or Ṣufī, Vedāntist or Vaiṣṇavite. He is, as he says himself, "at once the child of Allāh and of Rām." That Supreme Spirit Whom he knew and adored, and Whose joyous friendship he sought to induct the souls of other men, transcended. He embraced all metaphysical categories, all credal definitions; yet each contributed something to the description of that Infinite and Simple Totality Who revealed Himself, according to their measure, to the faithful lovers of all creeds.

Kabīr's story is surrounded by legends. Some of these emanate from a Hindu, some from a Muslim source, and claim him by turns as a Brāhman saint and as a Ṣūfi. "His name, however, is practically a conclusive proof of Muslim ancestry:" and the most probable tale is that which represents him as the actual or adopted child of a Muslim weaver of Banares, the city in which the chief events of his life took place.

In fifteenth-century Banares the syncretistic tendencies of *bhakti* religion had reached full development. Ṣūfis and Brāhmans appear to have met in disputation: the most spiritual members of both creeds propagating the teachings of Rāmānanda, whose reputation was then at its height. The boy Kabīr, in whom the

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63. R.N. Tagore, *One Hundred Poems of Kabīr*, London, 1962, pp. v-viii.

religious passion was innate, saw in Rāmānanda his destined teacher; but knew how slight were the chances that a Hindu *guru* would accept a Muslim as disciple. He therefore lay upon the steps of the river Ganges, where Rāmānanda was accustomed to bathe; with the result that the master, coming down to the water, trod upon his body unexpectedly, and exclaimed in his astonishment, 'Rām ! Rām !'—the name of the incarnation under which he worshipped God. Kabīr then declared that he had received the *mantra* of initiation from Rāmānanda's lips, and was by it admitted to discipleship. In spite of the protests of orthodox Brāhmans and Muslim *Mullāhs*, both equally annoyed by this contempt of theological landmarks, he persisted in his claim; thus exhibiting in action that very principle of religious synthesis which Rāmānanda had sought to establish in thought. Rāmānanda appears to have accepted him, and though Muslim legends speak of the famous Ṣūfī Pīr, Taqī of Jhansi, as Kabīr's master in later life, the Hindu saint is the only human teacher to whom in his songs he acknowledges indebtedness.

Kabīr's life story contradicts many current ideas concerning the Oriental mystic. Of the stages of discipline through which he passed, the manner in which his spiritual genius developed, we are completely ignorant. He seems to have remained for years the disciple of Rāmānanda, joining in the theological arguments which his master held with all the great Mullāhs and Brāhmans of his day; and to this source we may perhaps trace his acquaintance with the languages of Hinduism and Ṣūfīsm. He may or may not have submitted to the traditional education of the Hindu or the Ṣūfī contemplative: it is clear, at any rate, that he never adopted the life of the professional ascetic or retired from the world in order to devote himself to bodily mortifications and the exclusive pursuit of the contemplative life. Side by side with his interior life of adoration, its artistic expression in music and words—for he was a skilled musician as well as a poet—he lived the sane and diligent life of the Oriental craftsman. All the legends agree on this point: that Kabīr was a weaver, a simple and unlettered man, who earned his living at the loom. "Like Paul, the tent-maker, he knew how to combine vision and industry; the work of his

hands helped rather than hindered the impassioned meditation of his heart." Hating mere bodily austerities, he was no ascetic, but a married man, the father of a family—a circumstance which Hindu legends of the monastic type vainly attempt to conceal or explain—and it was from out of the heart of the common life that he sang his rapturous lyrics of divine love. Here his works corroborate the traditional story of his life. Again and again he extols the life of home, the value and reality of diurnal existence, with its opportunities for love and renunciation; pouring contempt upon the professional sanctity of the Yogī, who "has a great beard and matted locks, and looks like a goat," and on all who think it necessary to flee a world pervaded by love, joy and beauty—the proper theatre of man's quest—in order to find that One Reality Who has "spread His form of love throughout *all* the world."[64]

It does not need much experience of ascetic literature to recognise the boldness and originality of this attitude in such a time and place. From the point of view of orthodox sanctity whether Hindu or Muslim, Kabīr was plainly a heretic; and his frank dislike of all institutional religion, all external observance—"which was as thorough and as intense as that of the Quakers themselves"—completed, so far as ecclesiastical opinion was concerned, his reputation as a dangerous man. The "simple union" with Divine Reality which he perpetually extolled, as alike the duty and the joy of every soul, was independent both of ritual and of bodily austerities; the God whom he proclaimed was "neither in Ka'bah nor in Kailās." Those who sought Him needed not to go far; for He awaited discovery everywhere, more accessible to "the washerwoman and the carpenter" than to the self-righteous holy man. Therefore, the whole apparatus of piety, Hindu and Muslim alike—the temple and mosque, idol and holy water, scriptures and priests—were denounced by this "inconveniently clear-sighted poet" as mere substitutes for reality—dead thing intervening between the soul and its love:—

The images are all lifeless, they cannot speak:
I know, for I have cried aloud to them.

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64. *Ibid.*, pp. viii-xv.

The Purāṇa and the Kur'ān are mere words:
Lifting up the curtain, I have seen.

This sort of remark cannot be tolerated by organised religion; and it is not surprising that Kabīr, having his headquarters in Banares, the very centre of priestly influence, was subjected to considerable persecution. The well-known legend of the "beautiful courtesan sent by the Brāhmans to tempt his virtue, and converted, like the Magdalene, by her sudden encounter with the initiate of a higher love," preserves the memory of the fear and dislike with which he was regarded by the ecclesiastical powers. Once at least, after the performance of a supposed miracle of healing, he was brought before the Sulṭān Sikandar Lūdhī, and charged with claiming the possession of divine powers. But Sikandar Lūdhī, a ruler of considerable culture, was tolerant of the eccentricities of saintly persons belonging to his own faith. "Kabīr, being of Muslim birth," was outside the authority of the Brāhmans, and technically classed with the Ṣūfīs, to whom great theological latitude was allowed. Therefore, though he was banished in the interests of peace from Banares, his life was spared. This seems to have happened in 1495, when he was nearly sixty years of age; it is the last event in his career of which we have definite knowledge. Thenceforth he appears to have moved about amongst various cities of northern India, the centre of a group of disciples; continuing in exile that life of apostle and poet of love to which, as he declares in one of his songs, he was destined "from the beginning of time." In 1518, an old man, broken in health, and with hands so feeble that he could no longer make the music which he loved, he died at Maghar, near Gorakhpur.[65]

An interesting legend tells us that after his death, his Muslim and Hindu disciples disputed the possession of his body; while the Muslims wished to bury, the Hindus to burn. As they argued together, "Kabīr appeared before them, and told them to lift the shroud and look at that which lay beneath." They did so, and found in the place of the corpse, a heap of flowers; half of which were buried by the Muslims at

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65. *Ibid.*, pp. xv-xviii.

Maghar, and half carried by the Hindus to the holy city of Banares to be cremated—"fitting conclusion to a life which had made fragrant the most beautiful doctrines of two great creeds."[66]

LEGENDS OF KABĪR'S BIRTH

However, although in none of the sources of Kabīr's life that we have discussed is any account given as to the manner of his birth, yet numerous legends are in existence which relate to his birth. These legends have been recorded in the *National Biography Series* of India. Although these legends are often conflicting, yet they are very interesting and they supply such information as is not available in history. Let us consider them:

The first legend relates that one day a Brāhman, accompanied by his widowed daughter, went to visit Swāmī Rāmānanda. The lady did her obeisance to the saint and, not being aware of her widowed state, the latter said: "May you be blessed with a son!" What a holy man had said must be, and in due course the virgin widow was delivered of a boy, whom, for fear of scandal, she threw into the pond at Lahartara.[67] According to another version of this story, there is no mention of the name of Rāmānanda, instead, it tells of "a Brāhman widow who went with her father on a pilgrimage to the shrine of a famous ascetic.[68] In the third version of this legend an element of miracle has been added. It says that when Swāmī Rāmānanda discovered that the lady was a widow he said to her: "My daughter what I have said cannot be otherwise. But no blemish shall attach to your name and the son you will bear will be a great saint;" and the saint would arrange that the birth should not be after the usual manner. The lady is then said to have developed a blister on her palm which grew and grew and when it burst a live lump of flesh came out of it which immediately assumed the form of a human infant.[69]

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66. *Ibid.*, p. xix.
67. See Tiwārī, p. 2.
68. See Westcott, p. 3.
69. See Tiwārī, p. 3.

This part of the legend enables the Hindu section of the Kabīrpanthīs to explain the name Kabīr as a corruption of "Kar-Bīr" or "Karavīr" (the hero born from the palm of his Brāhman mother.)[70] But Keay dismisses this etymology as fanciful.[71] At any rate, the point sought to be proved here is that Kabīr was not born of a woman. The other point to note in this three-version-legend is that no mention of the place where the lady visited the saint has been made. However, when the baby was born, she placed it on a lotus-flower in the Lahar Talab (tank or pond), not far from Banares[72] where it was found by a Muslim weaver-couple, Nirū or Nīrū 'Alī, and his wife, Nīmā. They took him home and brought him up as their son.[73]

Another account of Kabīr's birth is more poetical in character and elaborate. It says that Kabīr descended from heaven to earth:

The lotus flower was blooming in the place where Kabīr was born. The bees were tired of humming. Peacocks, larks and other kinds of birds in their flight passed circling round the tank. Thunder and lightening were in the air when Kabīr became manifest in the heart of a lotus flower, in the midst of the Lahar Tank. A feeling of thirst overcome Nīmā, the newly wedded wife of Nīrū, the weaver, as after the marriage ceremony she was making her way to her husband's house. She approached the tank but was much afraid when she there beheld the child. She thought in her heart 'this is probably the living evidence of the shame of some virgin widow.' Nīrū suggested that they might take the child to their house, but

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70. Cf. *ibid*; also see Westcott, p. 4.

71. See *op. cit.*, p. 28.

72. As regards the Lahar Talāo or Talab, Macauliffe tells us that it is a lake about a mile and a quarter long, and an eighth of a mile broad. At the time of his visit in December (*ca.* 1906/7) it was, except for some rushes here and there, covered with a russet weed on which aquatic birds alighted and sported. On the margin of the lake is a small temple sacred to Kabīr. It is maintained by some monks, who, according to Macauliffe, are proud of their knowledge of Sanskrit literature. Hard by is the tomb of Nīrū, Kabīr's foster father (see *op. cit.* p. 123).

73. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 122-23; Keay, p. 9; Westcott, p. 4.

Nīmā at first hesitated, thinking that such action might give rise to scandal. Women would ask, 'who is the mother of a child so beautiful that its eyes are like the lotus ?' However, laying aside all fears, they took pity on the child. On approaching the house, they were welcomed with the songs of women, but when the women saw the child, dark thoughts arose in their hearts and they began to ask, 'How has she got this child ?' Nīmā replied that she had got the child without giving birth to it and the women then refrained from asking further questions.[74]

Still another legend is even more interesting. It says that once when Viṣṇu was consorting with Lakṣmī he abruptly left her presence. When he returned after a while, he explained to Lakṣmī that one of his devotees, who was in trouble, had called and he had to go to his rescue. Could there be a greater devotee than herself, Lakṣmī asked ? Of course, there were several, replied Viṣṇu. Lakṣmī was hurt and she decided to test the devotee who was the cause of her recent discomfort. Assuming the guise of a gardener's woman, she created the illusion of a beautiful garden at a spot by which the devotee, Swāmī Rāmānanda, would pass. The Swāmī had hardly entered the garden and picked a flower or two for his *Pūjā* when Lakṣmī stopped him, "You are stealing flowers, sir." He flung the flowers at her and went his way. When he looked back, the enchantment had vanished. Lakṣmī on her part was pleased that she had caught the devotee stealing. Back at Vaikuṇṭha, she narrated the incident to Viṣṇu and wishing to produce the flowers for Viṣṇu to inspect she looked into the folds of her dress. But lo and behold ! there were no flowers there: only a handsome baby, "What is this?" Viṣṇu asked. His spouse was confused. She accepted defeat. "It is all right," Viṣṇu reassured her. "Take the baby back to where you found it. He will be a great devotee of mine." Lakṣmī went and left the baby on a lotus leaf in the pond at Lahartara. This baby was Kabīr.[75]

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74. *Ibid.* In the *Kabīr Kasauti* this phrase occurs :
Sewak hokar utre is pirthiwi mānhi
(becoming a servant he descended upon this earth).
75. Cf. Tiwāri, pp. 3-4.

Last, but not the least, another legend says that Kabīr was the incarnation of the sage Śukadeva. God Śiva bade Śukadeva appear in the world for the good of men. Since the sage had already in a former birth suffered the pain of a foetal existence for no less than twelve years he was not keen to go through the experience a second time. So he enclosed himself in a shell and let it be cast into the Ganges. The current carried the shell to the Lahar Talāo and there opened on a lotus leaf, a baby coming out of it. This baby was Kabīr.[76]

These and similar stories evidently gained currency long after the death of Kabīr, for they all contain elements based on imagination. Most of the legends relating to Kabīr's birth and upbringing are found in a Hindi pamphlet entitled *Kabīr Kasauti*, Bombay, 1885. This pamphlet is the joint production of five members of the Kabīrpanth, and based upon information gathered both from books and oral tradition.[77] The stories featuring Viṣṇu, Śiva, Lakṣmī and Śukadeva are obviously based on Purāṇic pattern, even though the names of Viṣṇu and Śiva have been attached to inappropriate stories. The first legend may have some basis in fact. Lahar Talab invariably appears in all stories. Wilson tells us that some followers of Kabīr do not admit any story about Kabīr's birth except what is reported in the *Bhakta Mālā*. According to this legend, the child, who was no other than the incarnate deity, was found, floating on a lotus in Lahar Talab, by the wife of a weaver, named Nīmā.[78] Tiwārī informs us that the followers of Kabīr (that is, some of them) do not believe in any of the legends we have discussed above. They believe, according to Tiwārī, that Kabīr was not of woman-born, that he, being part manifestation (*aṁśa*) of *Sat Puruṣa* (True Being), is not subject to birth and death but brings himself forth whenever there is need. They believe, Tiwārī tells us further, that there had already been thirteen incarnations of

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76. See *ibid.*, p. 4.
77. Cf. Westcott, n. 9, p. 3.
78. This text of the *Bhakta Mālā* is printed in W. Price and Tarini Charan Mitra's *Hindee and Hindoostanee Selections*, Calcutta, 1827, I, 84. The text reads: " '*Alī julaha ne pāyā*" (i.e. Kabir was found by a weaer vnamed 'Ali).

Kabīr during the preceding three *Yugas*. For the fourteenth time, in *Kaliyuga*, the Divine Light of *Sat Puruṣa* descended on the full moon day of Jyeshṭha (second month according to Bengali calendar) in the year 1455 of the Vikrama era, at Lahar Talab near Kāśi (Banares or Vārāṇasi). A certain Aṣṭānanda Vaiṣṇava was present at the pond on the occasion. "There was a gentle drizzle from a clouded sky. Every now and then flashes of lightning illumined the soft dark prospect, revealing flowers in bloom over which beetles droned."[79] When Aṣṭānanda saw that "Divine Being" he was dazzled and dazed. He reported the miracle to his *guru*, Rāmānanda, who said, "You will hear more about the One whose sight has blessed you today. His name will soon resound everywhere."[80] "This Divine Light turned itself into an infant and a lotus leaf became its bed. It was this infant that Nīmā found."[81]

These legends are surely based on Kabīrpanthīs' beliefs and conviction. We may not argue against such beliefs whose basis is faith. Such convictions have there place and religious value. However, sometimes they are carried too far. And in these stories there is a good deal that common sense and history will not readily accept.

Putting together all these legendary stories, we may say nothing definite is known concerning either the parentage of Kabīr or his place of birth. Lahar Talab occurs in most of the stories but not that that was his birthplace. He was only found there. According to the *Benares Gazetteer*, Kabīr was born at Belhara, a village in the district of 'Aẓamgarh.[82] It is asserted that Belhara in course of time became "Lahartara" through linguistic distortion. But the investigations made by

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79. Quoted in Tiwārī, p. 5.

80. *Ibid.*

81. *Ibid.* The Kabīrpanthi books also say that Nirū and Nimā had been *bhaṅgīs* (scavengers) in a former life. Their son, Sudarśan, was a great devotee So in the following birth the two became Brāhmans and lived in a town called Chandvar, their names being Naraharī and Lachchimā. Their love of God was rewarded and Kabīr incarnated himself as their child. But since they were unable through nescience to recognise him he disappeared. The grief was too much for them. They both died and were born at Kāśi as weavers and went under the names Nirū and Nimā (see *ibid.*)

82. See Westcott, p. 2; also cf. Machwe, p. 10.

Dr. Tiwārī did not produce any clue as to the exact location of Belhara nor as to how it became transferred from 'Azamgarh to Banares. Yet others believe that Kabīr was born at Maghar. They produce the following *dohā* of Kabīr in evidence:

The first view of the world at Maghar I had,
then came to settle at Kāshi.[83]

But the difficulty here is that the authenticity of this and many similar couplets has not been established, and it can be said that a number of them are not genuine. As such they can no be accepted as valid materials for historical evidence. All that can be said with any degree of certitude is that Kabīr was found in the Lahar Talab by a Muslim weaver-couple, Nīrū and Nīmā who brought him up, and they all lived in Banares. As regards the rest of the stories, their legendary character is clear. Rāmānanda may not have anything to do with the birth of Kabīr. Apparently, it was the desire of the Kabīrpanthīs, probably of the Hindu section in particular, who wanted to raise a halo round the head of their spiritual preceptor, and to explain his Hindu origin, coined the story instead of saying what could have happened in actuality. Undoubtedly, it would appear that a certain woman, who gave birth to an illegitimate son, in order to save her face in the society, abandoned the baby in an uninhabited place. This is not an uncommon phenomenon in the society of the Indian sub-continent. Then, although the legend mentions a Brāhman widow, there is nothing unusual in supposing her to be a Muslim woman as well. Hence S. N. Dasgupta says, "Kabīr (1440-1518) was an abandoned child, probably because of the illegitimacy of his birth."[84] M. A. Macauliffe is in full agreement with this view.[85]

LEGEND OF KABĪR'S NAMING

Like the legends of Kabīr's birth, there is a legend about his being named Kabīr. It is stated that Nīrū and Nīmā

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83. Quoted in Tiwāri, p. 7.
84. HM, 157.
85. Cf. *op. cit.*, p. 122.

returned to their home at Kabīr Chaura or called by some as Nīrūtalla in the city of Banares with the child. And when the time came to name the baby, Nīrū 'Alī called the *Qāḍi* (Muslim religious functionary), who opened the Qur'an to find a name. He found the name *Kabir*, which means "great" and is used as an attribute of God. Again and again, the Qur'ān was consulted and every time the names that turned up were attributes of God, such as *Akbar, Kubra and Kibriyā.* Other *Mawlawis* were called, but to their astonisnment, in a few attempts they found in the Qur'ān only Kabīr. It was impossible, they all agreed, that a title of such dignity should be given as a name to a weaver's child. Since the *Mullāhs* were not willing to give this name to a human child, it is said they advised Nīrū to destroy the child. The legend has it that when Nīrū, in obedience to the priestly command, "struck the child with his sword" the blow had no effect on him. Nīrū, seeing this, was terrified, but the child uttered the following verse:

I have come from an unknown place.
Māyā has deceived the world; no one knows me.
I was not born of a woman, but manifested as a boy.
My dwelling was in a lonely spot nigh to Kāśī,
and the weaver found me.
I contain neither heaven (air) nor earth,
but wisdom only.
I have come to this earth in spiritual form
and of spiritual significance is my name.
I have neither bones nor blood nor skin.
I reveal to men the *Shabda* (word: this concept
of Kabīr will be dealt with later).
My body is eternal.
I am the highest being.

These are the words of Kabīr who is indestructible.[86] However, they ended up by giving the child the name Kabīr.

The veracity of the story may well be questioned on various grounds. Firstly, the legend has different versions.[87] Secondly,

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86. Quoted in Westcott, p. 5.
87. See Tiwāri, p. 1; Keay, p. 10; Westcott, pp. 4-5.

in one version instead of "sword" the term "knife" occurs. Although the function of both sword and knife is the same, yet it would appear improbable that a poor weaver like Nīrū could have owned a sword. Thirdly, the occasion of the alleged saying of Kabīr has been given differently. According to Macauliffe, when Kabīr reached an age to understand the nature of the doubts cast on his birth, he composed the above quoted verse.[88] Finally, no such parallel verse is found in the *Bijak*. It is very important to remember that the *Bijak*, which is accepted as more authentic than other sources, does not contain any verse pertaining to the circumstances of Kabīr's birth and his being named Kabīr. It would be quite unusual to suppose that such important incidents of Kabīr's life would not be known to all Kabīrpanthīs. Moreover, in the *Bijak* we have evidence to the effect that Kabīr never spoke of himself as one divine and superior being. In fact, he criticised the Brāhmans and the *Mullāhs* for their posing as superior beings, as we shall see in the next chapter.

From the very nature of the above story, its historicity can be doubted. It appears to be a spurious story told by Kabīr's followers, most probably the Muslim section, at a later time who wanted to glorify and sanctify their spiritual preceptor. Apparently, the foundation of the whole legend is the name "Kabīr". It must be emphasised that "Kabīr" has not been a unique or uncommon name in Indian society at any time. We have references to other people named Kabīr who lived in India at varying dates. Westcott gives eleven references to the name Kabīr in several historical works ascribed to different kinds of holy men who lived at different dates.[89] And oriental biographical dictionaries also record many people named Kabīr.[90] Moreover, it is a well-established Muslim custom to have an infant named by a religious person. The main object behind this tradition seems to have been a desire to have the child blessed by a *Mawlawī*. But there is no such

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88. See *op. cit.*, p. 124.
89. Cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 15-17.
90. See Beale, T. W., OBD, 204.

custom that the name should be found in the Qur'ān. The Qur'ān is not an index of names from which one can easily select names suitable for us. Furthermore, it is incredible that the *Mullāhs* time and again found in the Qur'ān the four names, viz., *Kabīr*, *Akbar*, *Kubrā* and *Kibriyā*, whereas there are ninety-nine such attributes of God in the Qur'ān. Still more, it is difficult to believe that the *Mullāhs*, who are religious persons should ask Nīrū to kill the baby. In spite of their somewhat more liberal attitudes in modern times, they are still opposed to even birth control. Finally, in the authentic sources, we have no evidence that Kabīr ever laid claim to divinity and powers of miracles for himself. What is more interesting is the fact that, unlike many *bhaktas* he refused to give any divine status even to *guru*. These are some of the features of his teaching for which Kabīr is seen as different from both Ṣūfīs and *bhaktas*.

Hence it may be asserted that the legend of Kabīr's naming is a creation of his Muslim followers who lived after him, designed to glorify their *Pīr*. At any rate, it is not a peculiar phenomenon in the case of Kabīr, it is almost a universal part of the mystical tradition that after the death of a saint his disciples coin all kinds of imaginary fables with the intention of sanctifying and glorifying their deceased preceptor whose blessings they seek.

PROBLEM OF KABĪR'S DATE

Before we go into the early life of Kabīr, we must deal with the problem of his date, which is very important. The difficulties in determining the date of Kabīr can be diminished by taking into consideration all historical dates related to Kabīr's life. According to one school of Kabīrpanthīs, Kabīr was present in the world three hundred years, or from 1149-1449[91]. In an alleged saying of Kabīr, mention is made of two saint-poets Jayadeva and Nāmadeva, as *gurus* of Kabīr.[92] The former lived in the twelfth century and the latter in the thirteenth century.

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91. See RSH, n. 27, p. 37.
92. Cf. Machwe, p. 9.

According to another tradition, Kabīr was born when the year 1455 of the Vikram era (corresponding to 1398 A.D.) was past, on Monday, full moon day of Jyeshṭha, on which date also fell the Vaṭa Sāvitrī festival. Some followers of Kabīr, according to Dr. Tiwārī, still continue to celebrate Kabīr's birthday on the Vaṭa-Sāvitrī day every year. But some people think, Tiwārī tells us, that Kabīr was born 25 or 30 years earlier.[93] Those who maintain that Kabīr was born at Belhara do not mention any specific date. Mawlawī Ghulām Sarwar gives 1594 as the year of Kabīr's death, but does not give the year of his birth. Abu'l Faḍl in his *A'in-i-Akbari*, written in 1596, makes reference to Kabīr as one of the holy men but no longer living.[94] The Kabīrpanthī school which holds that Kabīr was born in 1398 also maintains that he died in 1518.[95] The former is rejected by all on the ground that that date has been given in order to make Kabīr contemporaneous with Rāmānanda (b. 1299?) who is supposed to have lived in the fourteenth century.[96] The former is commonly believed to have been the disciple of the latter, whose dates, however, have been tentatively fixed by Farquhar[97] and others[98] as 1400-1470. And, according to them, Rāmānanda came to Banares as a religious reformer in 1430. If, therefore, Kabīr was born in 1440, as has been suggested by many,[99] and became the disciple of Rāmānanda about 1455, this would fit in well with the circumstances of his life. Kabīr is also believed to have been a contemporary of Guru Nānak, who lived from 1469 to 1538. He is said to have been 27 years of age when he met Kabīr; and the year of their meeting has been suggested 1496.[100] Kabīr is also believed to have been a

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93. *Op. cit.*, p. 2.
94. See Machwe, p. 9.
95. Cf. Westcott, p. 2; Keay, p. 27; Machwe, p. 15.
96. Cf. G. A. Grierson, "Bhakti-Mārga", p. 546; "Rāmānandis, Rāmawats", ERE, X, 569.
97. Cf., ORLI p. 331; also see J. N. Farquhar, "The Historical Position of Rāmānanda", JRAS, LII (1920), 185-92; LIV (1922), 373-80; Sitā Rām, "The Historical Position of Rāmānanda", JRAS, LIII (1921), 239.
98. Keay, pp. 9, 27-28; Macnicol, N., LRIP, 77.
99. See Dasgupta, p. 157; Westcott, p. 2.
100. See *ibid.*

contemporary of Sulṭān Sikandar Lūdhī who reigned from 1489 to 1517. And according to *The Cambridge History of India*, the Sulṭān visited Banares sometime between 1494 to 1496[101] (his relation with Kabīr will be dealt with later). Since these dates are very close to one another, they seem to enable us to fix Kabīr's dates approximately 1440 to 1518, albeit all that can be said with some degree of confidence is that he lived in the fifteenth century.

KABĪR'S EARLY LIFE

Like his birth and naming, concerning Kabīr's early life also similar stories are told. In these legends he is said to have performed many miracles even when he was only a baby. According to one tale, Kabīr spoke in Hindi in his childhood and told the people that on account of Nīmā's kindness to him in a previous birth, he had come to their house, and he would deliver them from transmigration.[102] In another story it is said that Kabīr grew up without taking any nourishment. When his foster parents saw that he ate nothing they were worried. Yielding to their persuasion, Kabīr agreed to take milk. This milk was obtained not in the usual manner. An earthen jar was placed under the udder of an uncalved heifer and Kabīr looked at the animal thinking of milk. This induced lactation in the heifer and the jar was quickly filled. "Milk obtained thus alone would Kabīr drink."[103]

These legends have their basis in faith. The first story appears to have been designed to parallel Kabīr with Jesus who is said to have spoken in his childhood. The followers of Kabīr who have coined the story must have been familiar with the life history of Jesus. The other story has been made to heighten the spiritual genius of Kabīr. It gives the impression that

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101. Sulṭān Sikandar Lūdhī had been engaged in wars in the area covering Jaunpur and Banares between the years 1494-99. He went to Banares at least once (cf. *Cultural History of India*, Vol. III : *Turks and Afghans*, ed. Sir Wolseley Haig, Delhi,1958, pp. 238-40.

102. See Keay, p. 10.

103. Tiwārī, p. 7.

Kabīr was a saint by birth. We have no intention of arguing that there has never been any person who showed signs of high spiritual quality and played miracles even as a child. But in the case of Kabīr, we have specific evidence in his own sayings that he was not a miracle worker, nor did he like those who lay claim to miracles. However, stories of miracles ascribed to Kabīr are but pious fabrications of his faithful disciples, who themselves probably worked miracles.

As regards Kabīr's education, the circumstances of his up-bringing in a poor Muslim weaver's family make it quite understandable that he did not have any formal education. His speech was a local dialect to which allusion has already been made. Nevertheless, he does not appear to have been apathetic to learning. In one place he says :

I know that reading is good, but. [better],
than reading is meditation (jog) (*Granth Śloka* 45).

Kabir's aim was not scholarship or philosophy; it was the knowledge of God, and of the things of God, which he sought after with all his heart and mind. He was neither able nor interested in the learning of the schools. A well-known proverb says : "What the theologians learn from books, the saints learn it from their hearts."

Now, let us turn to some important events of Kabīr's life. Although in Dr. Underhill's sketch of Kabīr's life slight reference has been made of most of these events, still they need detailed historical explanations. In passing, it may be mentioned that it is almost impossible to fix any chronological order of events in Kabīr's life. In such a situation we will try to describe them in a reasonable chronological order which will be based on our knowledge of a normal life in the society of the Indian sub-continent. Secondly, in every event of his life, almost invariably there is an element of his teaching one way or the other. In our study of his teaching in the next chapter the events touched upon here will not be repeated.

KABĪR REFUSED CIRCUMCISION

According to Muslim custom and tradition, a boy is circumcised at the age of 5 or 6. This time limit has not been ordained

by the Qur'ān though there are *aḥādith* (Muḥammad's sayings) which show that that was the practice in early Islām. When Kabīr reached that age he was to be circumcised; and a *khalifā* was calleed.[104] But Kabīr exhibited such strange portents that the *khalifā* was terrified. On this occasion Kabīr is said to have uttered the following verses :

Vain-glorious of authority, you make me to
be circumcised; never will I endure it, brother !
If it is God that makes thee to be circumcised,
why came not this cutting of itself?
If by circumcision one becomes Turk, what
then will be said to your women ?
Half the body, so the wife is styled;
then you still remain Hindu !
By putting on the sacred thread, does one
become a Brāhman ?
What has thou given to women to wear ?
She from birth is but a Sūdra !
Why dost thou eat the food she brings,
O Pandit ? (*Bījak*, *Śabda* 84).

It is evident in the above poem that in denouncing religious symbols and rites, Kabīr showed favour neither to Hindus nor to Muslims. His criticism of each of them is equally severe and categorical. The rites and practices which constitute the two forms of worship—Hinduism and Islām—appeared to him equally useless; it is in the heart that the true faith resides, Kabīr insisted. One interesting feature of his sayings is that though he starts denouncing any particular rite of one religion, he quickly links it with a similar aspect of the other religion, thus maintaining balance by criticising both the religions

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104. Also called *Qāḍī* (not to confuse with Muslim judge). In Bengālī he is called *Khalīfā* and *Usta*, the man who performs circumcision. It may be mentioned here that at the present time in most cases circumcision is done in the hospital if a boy is born there. Since circumcision is not ordained by the Qur'ān, it is a *sunnat-i-mu'akkidā* (a first grade custom of Islām which tantamounts to *farḍ-i-'aīn* or absolutely obligatory on all Muslims). Therefore, it has the force of universality. However, the mode of the old custom is undergoing modifications.

simultaneously. His equal denunciation of the Muslim rite of circumcision and Hindu rite of putting on the sacred thread is an example in point.

We are told that as a boy Kabīr offended both Hindu and the Muslim playmates by crying "Rām, Rām" and "Harī, Harī." Muslims called him a *kāfir* (unbeliever). To this accusation he replied saying that only an evil-doer was a *kāfir*. We are also told that one day he put a *tilak* on his forehead and put a thread round his neck and cried "Nārāiṇ, Nārāiṇ." This action roused the anger of the Brāhmans, for it was a sacrilege committed by a low caste "Muslim". To their protest, Kabīr retorted : "Being a weaver, I wear a thread. You wear the sacred thread, and repeat the Gāyatri and Gītā daily, but Govind dwells in my heart... .You are Brāhmans, I am a weaver of Banares . . . .

You daily search after an earthly king,
While I am contemplating Hari."[105]

The Hindus taunted Kabir with being a *Nirgura* (one without the guidance of a *guru*, in other words spiritual preceptor). It is said that to overcome this shortcoming, he was determined to seek out some *guru*. But no chances appeared quickly.

It is stated that in his boyhood, one day he found a cow that was slaughtered by a *Mullāh*. Kabīr objected to it strongly for which the Brāhmans felt delighted. On this occasion he uttered the following verses in which, of course, he did not spare either Muslims or Hindus :

O *Sants* (holy men) ! I have seen the way of both.
Hindus and Turks heed no warning;
to all the taste of their desires is sweet.
Hindus keep fast on *Ekadaśi* (the eleventh day
of the half-month, observed as a fast),
they eat only *singhārās* (water chestnuts)
and milk.

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105. *Ādi-Granth*, tr. E. Trumpp, p. 661 cited by Westcott, p. 6. It may be mentioned here that Kabir uses different names, such as *Harī*, *Sat Guru*, or only *Guru*, *Govind*, etc., for one God, although "Rāma" is the one that recurrently occurs in his poems.

They abstain from grain, but do not check the
mind's desire : next day they eat the flesh
of beasts.
Turks keep fast and hours of prayer : they
cry aloud on the name of God. [*adhān*].
How will they find Paradise ? When evening
comes they slaughter fowls.
Hindu and Turk, each has renounced his mercy
in his heart.
One kills by *halāl* (the Muslim legal formula of
slaughtering an animal), one kills by
jhaṭakā (Hindu method of killing an animal) ;
but fire is kindled in both their houses.
For Hindu and for Turk there is one path:
so the *Sat Guru* (True Teacher) has taught;
Says Kabīr, Listen, O Sants : Cry 'Rāma';
cry '*Khudā* (Persian and Urdū name for God)—
it is all one ! (*Bijak*, *Śabda* 10).

As we see in these verses, Kabīr started talking about the slaughtering of animals, particularly the cow, which he denounced. From there he passed over to other Hindu and Muslim religious observances such as fasting, prayer, etc. Finally, he has given us his conception of one God. It is clear that to Kabīr, the use of different names for God matters little; it is the One God. This attitude on the part of Kabīr is exactly in the vein of the mystics. The verses also show that Kabīr's expression of ideas is not systematic, and all his poems are distinguished by this particular characteristic.

At this stage we have information about five or six important events of his life, namely, his marriage and domestic life; his association with Hindu saints, especially with Rāmānanda; his association with the Ṣūfīs, particularly with Shaykh Taqī; his confrontation with Sulṭān Sikandar Lūdhī and, finally, his death. Although it is difficult to fix any chronological order for these events, as we have indicated before, we propose to describe them in the same sequence as they are mentioned here, so that the secular and spiritual aspects of his life can be discussed separately though they are not mutually exclusive.

KABĪR'S FAMILY LIFE

The question whether Kabīr was married or not has been hotly disputed, at first among his Muslim and Hindu disciples, and then among the modern writers. We cannot answer this question with absolute certainty, but the evidence appears to show that he was a married man. For the Muslims there is no problem in regarding him as a married man; for most of the Ṣūfīs are married; and celibacy is not encouraged by Islām. But the Hindus, who are wont to see that an ascetic and celibate life has greater value than a domestic one, have tried to explain the circumstances in a way that show that Kabīr was unmarried. Thus, while the Muslim tradition regards Loi as his wife, and Kamāl and Kamālī his son and daughter respectively, the Hindu tradition considers the latter two as his disciples as well as the first-named who, it is argued, was also his disciple having learnt his profession of weaving by frequently visiting his home. This suggestion about Loi has been rejected by some on two grounds : firstly, that it would be unlikely for a woman disciple to adopt the *guru's* profession;[106] secondly, that in the society of the Indian sub-continent a woman, disciple or not, usually would not live in a man's house unless married to him. However, there are two poems which show clearly that Kabīr was married and had children.

In the first of these, Loi, being anxious, like Kabīr's mother, at the neglect of his weaving and also at his constant entertainment of the saints, addresses him thus :

Thy threads are broken, thy size is at an end,
Thy reeds shine over the door,
Thy poor brush hath gone to pieces,
May death light on this shaven fellow's head !
This shaven fellow hath lost all his property.
I am persecuted by those [sādhus] coming and going.
Kabīr now never speaketh of his beam or shuttle;

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106. Cf. Keay, p. 32; also see Westcott, p. 22. But the latter gives a different version. He says that Muslim tradition considers Kabīr, like other Ṣūfīs, as a married man, but does not give his wife's name, whereas Hindu tradition mentions the name Loi as his disciple.

His mind is only concerned with the name of God.
His daughter and sons [*sic*] have nothing to eat;
Men with shaven heads are crammed in, night and day;
One or two are in the house, and one or two are on the way.
We have only a pallet [on the ground]; *they* get a bed [to sleep on].

. . . . . .

We get parched pulse, they have bread [to eat].
These shaven-heads and my shaven-headed [husband] have become all one.

To this complaint Kabīr replied thus :

These shaven-heads are the support of the drowning.
Hear, O blind misguided Loi !
Kabīr hath taken the protection of these shaven-heads
(*Ādi Granth, Gaund* 6).[107]

At any rate, the circumstances under which Kabīr married Loi are told in great details in *Kabir Kasauti*. The legend says that at the age of thirty Kabīr met Loi, aged about twenty, in the cottage of a *Bankhaṇḍi-Bairāgi* (ascetic who lived in the jungle), on the bank of the Ganges. To her questions as to who he was, what was his caste and sect, Kabīr replied : "Kabīr". The legend is interpreted as meaning that Kabīr did not like the idea that there can be any distinction between man and man on the grounds of caste and sect. In other words, Kabīr maintained that there is one God, one human race, therefore, one religion. The girl, however, was charmed by Kabīr's spiritual quality. Kabīr took Loi home, and his mother, Nīmā, thinking that her son brought a wife, accepted her as Kabīr's wife.[108]

According to another account, Kabīr had two wives, one homely, the other pretty. The second wife was called Dhania or Ramjania (cf. *Granth, Āsā* 32, 33). As the latter name is

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107. There is another verse where Loi may be the speaker asking for Kabir's forgiveness. Or Kabīr is the speaker addressing God—the former is the wife and the Latter is the Husband (cf. *Ādi Granth, Āsā* 35). This is supported by the use of similar language elsewhere. Obviously, it is an expression typical of Nammālvār.

108. Cf. Westcott, pp. 7-9; also see Keay, p. 15. The legend says that a *sādhu* found her floating in the Ganges, wrapped in a woollen cloth (*loi*), whence the name Loi.

also used euphemistically for dancing girls, some suggest that this second consort was probably a courtesan.[109] But since no tradition supports his second marriage, *Āsā* 32 is explained as Kabīr's spiritual achievement which is contrasted with the unhappiness of his married life.[110] The Kabīrpanthīs do not accept the thesis of a second marriage of Kabīr. In fact, they resent it.[111]

According to some legends, Kabīr's son Kamāl and his daughter Kamālī were not his actual offspring but children, he found dead on two different occasions whom he restored to life and adopted as son and daughter. It is also said that both of them worked with him at the loom.[112]

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109. Cf. Keay, p. 34; Machwe, p. 12.

110. See Keay, p. 34.

111. Cf. Machwe, p. 12.

112. There are two Kamāl legends : According to one story, one day when Kabīr was walking on the banks of the Ganges with a certain Shaykh Taqī, the corpse of a child was seen floating by. Shaykh Taqī challenged Kabīr to raise it to life. This he did, and taking it home he adopted it as his own son. The Shaykh said, "You have indeed shown great perfection (*kamāl*)." So the boy was named Kamāl. According to another story, Kabīr caught sight of the child floating down the stream in the Ganges wrapped in a blanket (*kamlī* or *kammal*, *kambal*), and he cried out "kammal, kammal". So he named the child Kamāl, which is a corruption of *kammal* or *kambal* (cf. Westcott, pp. 9, 21; Keay, pp. 15-16, 35). About the later life of Kamāl, little is recorded. Like his father, he is said to have been a renowned *bhakta*, and a man of deep spiritual experience, and a poet of high order (see Sen, K. M.,MMI, 91. A verse in the *Ādi-Granth* says as follows:

Kabīr's -family was ruined when his son Kamāl was born Ceasing to remember Harī, he brought home wealth (cited by Keay, p. 16).

It is also stated that Kamāl opposed his father's teaching, and composed verses in refutation of it. One tradition says that Kamāl became the guru of Dādū, the founder of the Dādūpanthī sect. Another story connects Kamāl with Shaykh Taqī, and says that as he differed from his father, Kabir, the Shaykh gave him (Kamāl) permission to settle at Jalālpur, about ten miles from Jhusī (see *ibid.*). About twelve miles from Jhusī, the tomb of a certain Shaykh Kamāl is shown; but it cannot be certainly identified as being that of Kabir's son (cf. *ibid.*, p. 35). Like Kamāl's legend, a similar story is told about the coming of Kamālī. According to some accounts she was a child who had died in the house of a neighbour and Kabir raised her to life; according to others, the daughter of Shaykh Taqī, who had already been eight days in the grave (see *ibid.*, p. 16).

According to a tale, when Kamāli was twenty years of age, she was one day drawing water from a well. A Brāhman, who was thirsty, asked for

Apparently these legends are told by those disciples of Kabīr, probably the Muslims, who wanted to raise a halo round the head of their *pīr* by attributing to him the working of miracles; otherwise, we find no difficulty in accepting the idea of Kabīr as the father of some children since he seems to have been married.

All modern writers on Kabīr are in full agreement that he was a householder, who earned his livelihood at the spinning wheel which did not interfere in his devotion.[113] In other words, although Kabīr was a householder, yet he found opportunities for meditation. It is in the spirit of the Ṣūfī tradition that family life is not incompatible with spiritual life.

As regards Kabīr's domestic life, we are told that he continued to live with his foster parents and followed his profession as a weaver. But his avid interest in religion and religious men sometimes led him to neglect his business, for which his wife rebuked him, as we have noticed before. Like his wife, his

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drink, but was afterwards horrified to find he had taken water from a weaver's daughter. The Brāhman rebuked her for breaking his caste. The matter was referred to Kabīr, who replied thus :

O Paṇḍit, think, when thou drinkest water.
In the mud-dwelling, wherein thou sittest,
the universe is contained :
Where fifty-six *koṭis* of Yādavās (one *koti*: ten millions. The Yādavās were the tribesmen of Kṛṣṇa) perished, eighty-eight thousand men and *munis* (sages):
At every step prophets are buried, they decayed to dust therein.
Fish, tortoise, and crocodile there gave birth,
the water is filled with blood.

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Thou, O paṇḍit, thou didst sit down to drink;
yet the earthen pot thou accountest defiled.
Renounce the Vedas and the Book, O paṇḍit;
all these are fictions of the mind.
Kabīr says, Hear, O paṇḍit; these are your pious
deeds (*Bījak*, *Śabda* 47).

The Brāhman, named Har Deva, fell at Kabīr's feet, begged his pardon and became Kabīr's disciple. Kabīr accepted him, and Kamālī was married to him (cf. Keay, p. 17).

113. Cf. Tara Chand, p. 149; Bhagi, M. L., MICT, 177; Keay, pp. 13-16, 32-35; Westcott, pp. 7-9; Tiwārī, p. 14.

mother also seems to have reproached him for his neglect of his trade. She seems to have complained to other relatives. The following verses are attributed to her :

Thou art always rising early and bringing fresh utensils;
thy life hath gone in plastering *cooking squares*;
Thou payest no attention to thy weaving;
thou art engrossed in the pleasure of saying 'God, God'.
Who in our family hath ever uttered the name of Rām?
Since this worthless son of ours began to wear a
rosary, we have no peace.
Hear, wife of my eldest-brother-in-law;
hear, wife of my youngest brother-in-law;
a wonderful thing hath occurred !
This boy hath ruined our weaving business;
why is he not dead ?

Kabīr replied to his mother :—

The one God is the Lord of all happiness;
the guru hath granted me His name.
He preserved the honour of the saint Prahlād,
and destroyed Harnākhas with
Narsinh's nails.
Prahlād abandoned the gods and ancestors
of his house, and embraced the instruction
of his guru Nārada.
Saith Kabīr, God is the destroyer of all sin;
He saveth His saints.[114]

Since, a legend has it that Kabīr was the adopted son of Muslim parents—his real parents may have been Hindus—, it is quite understandable that he showed unusual inclination towards Hinduism. He uttered Hindu words for expressing his religious ideas and pronounced Rāma as God. This must have shocked his parents who expressed their resentment. As an adopted son of Muslim parents, they would naturally have liked to see him professing their religion, i.e., Islām. But, fortunately, or unfortunately, Kabīr did not have any aptitude for any organised religion. His was a religion of one God, which was above all categories. Thus his religious views must have

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114. Cited in Keay, pp. 13-14; Macauliffe, p. 128.

disappointed his Muslim foster parents. And it seems that Kabīr himself regretted the matter that people, particularly members of his family, misunderstood him or did not understand him at all. Thus when Kabīr says, "Kabīr has died by the faults of the world, walking in obsequiousness to the family" (*Ādi-Granth, Śloka* 166), he seems to give expression to his sorrow at being misrepresented and persecuted by the Hindus and the Muslims alike.

However, Kabīr does not seem to have been unaware of the fact that his too great an involvement in matters of religion, such as meeting the saints, entertaining them, conversing with them, and personal devotion (*bhakti*) to God, led him to be unattentive to his business, the only source of his family's livelihood. But Kabīr, believing that he was acting in accordance with the wish of God, affirms his dependence on God and hopes to get the needs of himself and his family met. Hence he says :

O thou compassionate to the poor, I trust in Thee !
All my family I have put into the boat (*Ādi-Granth, Gauri* 61).

Still there is another verse in which Kabīr's mother appears to have asked him to give attention to his own business and leave religious matters to Brāhmans and *Mullāhs*. To this Kabīr replied :

While the thread was passing through the bobbin,
I forgot my beloved God.
My understanding is mean, my caste is that of weaver;
But I have gained the name of God as may profit.
Saith Kabīr, Hear, O mother !
The One God will provide for us and them.[115]

This attitude on the part of Kabīr is exactly in line with Ṣūfī tradition which holds it to be a form of piety to be dependent on God (*tawakkul 'ala Allāh*) for provision instead of struggling for it. Although the Ṣūfīs were householders, yet they disliked hoarding of money or possessing great wealth which they considered as a hindrance to spiritual progress. Kabīr seems to have maintained this Ṣūfī tradition perfectly. At a time when he was

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115. Quoted in Keay, p. 31.

hard-pressed for the simple necessities of life, he prayed to God for help. Such prayers are cited in all literature.[116]

KABĪR'S RELATION WITH HINDUISM

Turning to the subject of Kabīr's relation with Hinduism, and its influence on him, we see there has been a good deal of speculation as to how Kabīr, being a Muslim at least by up-bringing, could have grown up with such strong Hindu leanings. His inclinations towards Hinduism and his intimate knowledge of it, led writers like Wilson and Bhandarkar to consider him a Hindu. But there is no evidence to support this thesis, as we have noted before. However, we can explain his relation with Hinduism by other means.

Firstly, in the story of his birth, mention is made of a certain Gosain Ashtānanda, a Hindu saint of Banares, who is said to have been a disciple of Rāmānanda. One legend says that Gosāīn witnessed the scene of Kabīr's exposure by his Brāhman mother at Lahar Talab, and, consequently, the saint might have followed the child's destination to Nīrū's house and taught him Hindu ideas as opportunities offered.[117] Aḥmad Shāh suggests that if Kabīr were a Hindu widow's son of illegitimate birth, Gosain may have been the real father.[118] That may be, but we have no evidence to support it. Gosain's name is never mentioned in the *Bijak* or in the *Granth*. Nonetheless, Kabīr appears to have had regular intercourse at his home with a number of saints; Gosain may be only one of them from whom Kabīr got his acquaintance with Hinduism.

Beside this possibility, Kabīr's familiarity with Hinduism can be explained otherwise. All traditions agree that he was born and brought up in Banares and lived his whole life there. During the medieval period, particularly the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, there was a great upsurge of *bhakti* movements all over India in which the Hindu and Muslim saints, coming

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116. For example, see *Ādī-Granth*, *Śloka* 60;.....*Soraṭhā* 11 cited by Keay, pp. 38-39.

117. See Macauliffe, p. 124; Keay, p. 29.

118. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 28.

together in an atmosphere of harmony and concord, reached what is called the climax of Indian spiritual tradition. During that period of interaction and assimilation between the two systems, the saints used to assemble in important places like Banares, for religious discussions. We are told that in Banares Rāmānanda had regular disputations with Hindu and Muslim saints.

Banares being the holiest of all places for Hinduism, Hindu pilgrims from all over the country would gather there occasionally. This venerable city with its shrines and temples, and those stately bathing *ghāṭs* leading down to the Ganges, and its throngs of mendicants — Hindu and Muslim — devotees and *bhaktas* could not but make a deep impression on a thoughtful boy like Kabīr, who from his very boyhood had given expression to his religious feelings. Here in this city, one would meet with new people and new ideas. For Kabīr, living in Banares enabled him to meet with various people who helped to form his ideas. Being a weaver's son, from a class of poor people, it is not surprising that Kabīr had not had any formal schooling. Notwithstanding the economic handicap, Kabīr does not seem to have been devoid of intelligence of a high order. His interests in matters of religion must have energised him to acquire whatever religious knowledge he could from those with whom he came in contact. There was a spiritual hunger in him; he was a seeker after truth from his boyhood. His quest for divine knowledge would not be satisfied without diving deep for it.

Apart from this general religious atmosphere that prevailed in Banares, where the Hindu and Muslim religious personalities had regular spiritual intercourse, there was at that time a luminary whose glamour seized the religious consciousness of many. It was Rāmānanda, the great *bhakta* at the height of his fame, who was teaching a way of salvation based on *bhakti* as against the ceremonialism of orthodox Hinduism and Islām. It is not at all surprising if Kabīr, with such a strong inclination towards religion, was captivated and longed to become a disciple.

However, all traditions agree that Kabīr became a disciple of Rāmānanda; and all these sources have uniformly narrated the method that Kabīr adopted to obtain the discipleship. In these accounts it is mentioned that Rāmānanda was not willing

to accept Kabīr as his disciple for he was a Muslim and a low caste. It needs some explanation, for even before Rāmānanda there were cases where a Ṣūfī or a Hindu saint had both Hindu and Muslim disciples; and those saints were venerated by the Hindus and the Muslims equally. Secondly, Rāmānanda himself had disciples from all castes. Then how does one explain his opposition to Kabīr. If the story of opposition were true, it can be explained only by holding that Kabīr was probably the first Muslim and low-caste person to become Rāmānanda's disciple. The name of Rāmānanda is mentioned once in the *Bijak*, namely, *Śabda* 77 : "Rāmānanda drank deep of the juice of Rāma; says Kabīr : I am weary with repeating this." In Tagore's *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, it is stated, "I became suddently revealed in Benares, and Rāmānanda illumined me" (no. 29, ll. 19-20)

But the issue of discipleship became a matter of clamour for both Hindus and the Muslims. Rāmānanda, however, calmed it by publicly declaring his acceptance of Kabīr as his disciple. From the time of initiation, Kabīr, is said to have regularly visited his *guru* and, as time passed, to have taken part in religious disputations with distingnished personalities who came to deliberate with his *guru*. Through these discussions and Rāmānanda's instructions, Kabīr gained a considerable knowledge of Hinduism.

KABIR'S RELATION WITH ISLĀM

As regard Kabīr's relation with Islām, it can be safely concluded that he was an adopted son of a Muslim weaver, Nīrū or Nūr 'Alī, as all accounts concur. There was nothing wrong on the part of a Muslim family adopting a *luqta* (found child) with or without knowledge of its origin. According to Islamic tradition, all children are born pure and free from all defilement. However, there are some writers who are willing to accept Kabīr as a Muslim by birth, and a Ṣūfī without making any reference to the traditional story of his birth. Thus one writer concludes, "The right conclusion seems to be that Kabīr was a Muslim Ṣūfī who, having come under Rāmānanda's influence, accepted some Hindu ideas and tried to reconcile Hinduism

and Islām. However it was the Hindus, and particularly those of the lower classes, to whom his message appealed."[119] But still we feel reluctant to agree with them, for the other tradition is much stronger and has obtained almost unanimous support.

Now, as a member of a poor Muslim weaving family, we cannot expect Kabīr to have had any early religious education. It is clear that Kabīr did not have any religious education either at home or at any school. On the other hand, it is also fairly clear that he did not show any desire to attach himself to any organised religion. He was brought up in a Muslim family; nonetheless, he had little to do with that Islām which was professed by his family. What the theologians learned from the Qur'ān and other books, Kabīr, being mystically oriented, learned from his personal experience, that is, from his heart. Thus one writer says, "It is plain, however, that the mystic Islām of the Ṣūfīs laid hold of him, whether he ever lived the Muhammadan life or not."[120]

Kabīr, then, seems to have come into close touch with Ṣūsfīm. We need not here explain what Ṣūfīsm is, for we have dealt with this subject : its nature and doctrines, and its difference from orthodox Islām, in some detail in a previous chapter. As to who the Ṣūfīs were with whom Kabīr came in contact, and whose influence went to form his ideas it is difficult to point to any one clearly with the exception of Shaykh Taqī.

Shaykh Taqī's name is mentioned in many places. We find it in the story relating to Kabīr's son, Kamāl.[121] In the *Bījak*, *Ramainī* 48 and 63 mention Shaykh Taqī's name; the latter is usually interpreted thus : "Kabīr settled for a while in Manikpur having heard the praises of Shaykh Taqī. He heard also about Uji in the district of Jaunpur. At Jhusī he heard the

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119. Ikrām, p. 126; also see *Religious Literature of India*, p. 332; Westcott, p. 20; Underhill, in Tagore's *One Hundred Poems of Kabīr*, p. v; Zaehner, R. C., *Hindūism*, New York, 1966, p. 137.

120. *Religious Literature of India*, p. 331.

121. Cf. *supra*, n. 112, p. 174.

names of his Pīrs (i.e., Shaykh Taqī and his father Sha'ban-ul-Millat)."[122]

However, the exact relationship of Kabīr with Shaykh Taqī is somewhat obscure. In the Hindu legends, he is generally presented as the enemy and persecutor of Kabīr; he appears to have been jealous of Kabīr, for he thought the latter was replacing him in the favour of the Sulṭān Sikandar Lūdhī. On the other hand, Muslim tradition claims that Shaykh Taqī was a *pīr* of Kabīr, who is said to have been a young man of about thirty years when he first met the former. It is further stated that Kabīr besought the Shaykh to bestow upon him a blessing that would give him power to remove those differences of belief which separated Hindus from Muslims. Though the Shaykh regretted this, yet he said that he would like to see that both Muslims and Hindus regarded Kabīr with reverence. Moreover, Kabīr's son, Kamāl, also considered the Shaykh as his *pīr*.[123]

The elaborate legends say that it was Shaykh Taqī who voiced the feelings of Muslims against Kabīr's ideas, and accused him before Sulṭān Sikandar Lūdhī for laying claim to divinity. Westcott appears to have given much attention to the problem of Kabīr's relation to Shaykh Taqī. According to his findings, there were two Shaykh Taqīs: the one was of Manikpur Karā in the Fatehpur district, a cotton cleaner by profession and belonged to the Chishtī order of Ṣūfīs, and his descendants are still to be found in that district. He died in 1545. Since Kabīr seems to have lived at Manikpur for sometime, argues Westcott, it was not impossible for him to have met this Shaykh Taqī. Apparently, this Shaykh Taqī has been mentioned in the *Khazīnat-ul-Aṣfiyā*. According to this book, Shaykh Taqī was a weaver and died in 1574, when he was succeeded by Shaykh Kabīr, the weaver.[124]

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122. Westcott, p. 12; Keay, p. 36.

123. See *ibid.*, pp. 16, 38; also cf. Westcott, p. 26.

124. Manikpur is situated on the northern bank of the Ganges, between Fatehpur and Allahābād. It was for a short time the military headquarters of Sulṭān Sikandar Lūdhī. Near Manikpur, but on the southern bank of the river is Karā, generally known as Karā Manikpur, at that time a city of

The date of the death of the Shaykh in the two above mentioned accounts is given differently. This cannot be accounted for unless an editorial mistake is acknowledged. Secondly, in the account of the *Khazinat-ul-Asfiyā*, the mention of Kabīr's succession to Shaykh Taqī is probably a traditional way of describing the relationship between two Ṣūfīs; otherwise, we have no other evidence to support the view that Kabīr belonged to an organised order of Indian Ṣūfīsm.

The other Shaykh Taqī, son of Sha'ban-ul-Millat, lived in Jhusī, and belonged to the Suhrawardīya order of Indian Ṣūfīsm. He is said to have died in 1429.[125] Although Westcott suggests that it would seem that Kabīr was more closely associated with this Shaykh Taqī, we are not in a position to agree with this contention unless his date of death, 1429, is recognised as a mistake. We have accepted Kabīr's date of birth 1440. Kabīr may have met one of the successors in office of this Shaykh Taqī. As regards the *Ramaiṇi* which refers to this Shaykh, it seems to have been only a speculation made by Westcott, for in the text only the word "Pirs" is mentioned without reference to any specific name.

It appears that Kabīr was associated with a Ṣūfī named Shaykh Taqī most probably of Manikpur Karā, or both Karā and Jhusī. In addition to him, or them, Kabīr seems to have been associated with other Ṣūfīs. In the *Ramaiṇi* 48, it is said that he heard of twenty-one *pīrs* in all. In this connection, the names of Shaykh Aqardī and Shaykh Saqardī, most probably two brothers, have been mentioned. They are said to have been the caretakers of the shrine of Shaykh Taqī.[126] Such

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considerable importance, the Muslim capital of the surrounding country Karā. Jhusī stands near the confluence of the Ganges and the Jumna in the immediate neighbourhood of Allahābād (see Westcott, pp. 24-25).

125. See *ibid.*, p. 26; also cf. Keay, p. 37.

126. *Ramaiṇī* 48 of the *Bījak* reads as follows :

Through Manikpur Kabīr passed;
There he heard of the fame of Shaikh Taqqi.
At the place which is called Jaunpur,
And at Jhusi I heard the names of many pirs.
There are written twenty-one pirs.
They all were giving discourses in the name of the prophet.

relationship of Kabīr with Ṣūfīs, and the Ṣūfīstic nature of his teaching, prompted writers like R. D. Ranade to construe Kabīr as the greatest of the mystics.[127]

Besides these individual Hindu and Muslim saints that have been specified above, Kabīr seems to have been associated with a host of saints for whose fellowship he had all words of laudation. Leaving aside his attitude to a *guru* to be discussed later, we may turn to his attitude to holy men in general.

KABĪR'S ATTITUDE TO SAINTS

Kabīr found association with saints of immense value for spiritual progress as against intercourse with the evildoers which was to be avoided by all means. Kabīr, however, did not accept all saints unconditionally; instead he insisted that one should find out those sincere, true of heart and perfect saints who have themselves tasted something of the blessings of fellowship with God. Intercourse with them is elevating for spiritual life. Thus Kabīr says :

You never kept the company and fellowship of *sants*;
Thus with your own hand you have thrown away your life.
Tomorrow you will not gain an abode like this :
You have not known the companionship of sādhūs
(*Bījak Ramaiṇī* 44).

If you would be a sādhū, frequent the company
of a sādhū who is perfect.
If you press unripe mustard seed,
you get no oil nor cakes (*Bījak, Sākhī* 282).

We have also noticed bêfore that Kabīr's mother and wife remonstrated with him not to keep constant company with ascetics and *sādhūs* whom he was wont to entertain all the time thus neglecting his own business of weaving. No specific name of any of these people is mentioned anywhere. It is quite reason-

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When I heard the talk, I could not refrain myself:
Seeing these graves, ye are gone astray.
The works of the friend of God and of his prophet;
Followed by you in practice only, are become unlawful.
O Shaikh Akardi and Shaikh Sakardi, listen to my words.
See the beginning and the end from age to age with open eyes.

127. PGHL 10.

able to surmise that among them there were both Hindu *sādhūs* and Muslim Ṣūfīs and *Faqirs*.

Recapitulating what we have discussed so far about Kabīr's relationship with Hinduism and Islām, we can safely conclude that he had constant intercourse with the representatives of both religions, especially with Rāmānanda and Shaykh Taqī, from both of whom he received those ideas which he used to fuse the two religions. It is in this light of the blending of the two faiths that Kabīr is seen by all. And thus he was revered by Hindus and Muslims alike as is the case with some Ṣūfīs before him. Hence, one writer says, "Rāmānanda's movement provided the Hindu influence which went to the making of Kabīr but Islām also contributed largely."[128] Notwithstanding the double influence, instead of getting lost in the terrain between them, Kabīr emerged with a totally new doctrine, which was neither totally Hinduism nor totally Islām, but a combination of the good elements of both. "The famous Kabīr was a follower of Rāmānanda," ramarks G. Macmunn, "but he developed a teaching that was practically a religion of his own."[129] In the same tone another western writer says, "In Kabīr, were mingled elements of both Hindu and Muslim saints, although he himself seems to have belonged to no closed order, whether theological or philosophical, neither to any given sect, nor yet to any one religious household. He was something of a Ṣūfī and something of a *bhakta*. Hindus have revered him as a *guru* and Muslims as a *pīr*."[130]

KABĪR FACES OPPOSITION

However, in spite of the great reverence in which Kabīr is said to have been held by the Hindus as well as by the Muslims of his line, it appears that in some circles — and that includes his own family — he was misunderstood. Although there is no mention of any particular person or persons, yet it appears that some people, most probably orthodox Hindus and

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128. ORLI 331.
129. RHCI, 74.
130. *The Sikhs*, p. 49. Italics are mine.

Muslims, criticised him and even despised his teachings which appeared to them strange. Kabīr evidently felt their rejection keenly, though he held himself up boldly against them, and sought consolation and refuge in God. Thus he says :

Why do the helpless people censure [me],
in whose mind there is no divine knowledge ?
Kabīr delights in Rāma;
all other concerns are given up by me [*sic*],
I gather no leaves [to offer to idols] and
I worship no idols.

.. ..

People say Kabīr is mad:
But [only] God knoweth Kabīr's secret (*Ādi-Granth, Śloka* 46).

Sometimes Kabīr appears to have been the victim of slander, which he took with good humour like other saints. He realised that evil-doers would in the long run suffer while he would remain unaffected. Below is an illustration of Kabīr's tolerant attitude to those hostile people :

Slander me, slander me, O people, slander me !
Slander is very pleasant to the people.
Slander [is my] father, slander [is my] mother,
If one is slandered he goes to Paradise,
The blessing of the Name is settled in [his] mind
When he, who is of a pure heart, is slandered,
The slanderer washes then my clothes.
Who slanders me, he is my friend.
My thought is in the slanderer.
He is a slanderer who stops the slander.
The slanderer seeks my life.
Slander against me I like and love.
Slander effects my salvation.
To humble Kabīr, slander is the best.
The slanderer is drowned; I cross over (*Granth, Gauṛi* 71).

KABĪR'S RELATION WITH SIKANDAR LŪDHĪ

In connection with the opposition that Kabīr appears to have faced mention may be made of his so-called confrontation with Sulṭān Sikandar Lūdhī. The elaborate story of his being brought

before the Sulṭān, and the various types of punishment that the Sulṭān is said to have inflicted on him, his overcoming them by miracles, and the Sulṭān's eventual begging for his forgiveness and offer to undergo any penalty that Kabīr would impose on him, may be discarded as mere legend designed to embellish Kabīr's spiritual greatness in confrontation with a ruler who had the authority to do anything he wished.[131] It may be conjectured that Kabīr gave offence to both Hindu and Muslim orthdoxies by the novelty of his ideas. On the other hand, Sikandar Lūdhī was famous for his bigotry, for by his orders a Brāhman, who refused to accept Islām though he acknowledged its validity, was executed.[132] Under these circumstances, it was not impossible that a combined orthodox Hindu and Muslim delegation took advantage of the opportunity created by the Sulṭān's visit to Jaunpur and Banares in 1494-96[133] to wait upon him with the expectation of bringing administrative pressure on Kabīr. It is also plausible that the delegation may have remembered what Muslim administrators had done to other heretical Ṣūfīs like Manṣūr Hallāj. In any event, it is quite possible that the Sulṭān had a personal meeting with Kabīr and found him not guilty of what the Hindu and Muslim religious personalities had accused him of. It may be mentioned here that unlike the Arab-Muslim administration of Baghdād, the minority Indian Muslim administration took special care not to offend the Ṣūfīs and the *Sādhūs*, probably with the sole exception of the Sulṭān Ghiyās-ud-Dīn Tughluq (1320-25).[134]

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131. The persecution of Kabir by Sulṭān Sikandar Lūdhī figures in all the accounts, but the stories of this vary greatly (cf. Keay, pp. 20-23; Westcott, pp. 10-11, 20; Tiwārī, *op. cit.*)

132. The name of the Brāhman is given as Bodhan who was from Bengal (cf. Haig, W. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of India*, Vol. III; 240; *Turks and Afghans*, Delhi, 1958, p. 240; Pandey, A. B., *Early Medieval India*, Allahābād, 1960, p. 413; Westcott, p. 20).

133. Sulṭān Sikandar Lūdhī had been busy in wars in the area covering Jaunpur and Banares between the years 1494 to 1499, and he seems to have visited Banares sometime between 1494-96 (cf. Haig, pp. 238-40).

134. The Sulṭān was averse to the Ṣūfīs, particularly to Shaykh Nizām-ud-Dīn Awliyā of Delhi, who was the head of Chīshtī order of that time. It is said that when the Sulṭān was returning from his campaign to Bengal, he sent an order to the Shaykh to quit the city of Delhi before his arrival. The

The Muslim rulers of India, in fact, tried hard to come as close as possible to the saints, although the latter took care to keep themselves aloof from the administration. This tendency toward aloofness was altered only by the Naqshbandī order at the beginning of the seventeenth century when Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī became a prominent figure.[135]

J. C. Archer tells us that the Sulṭān was satisfied with the belief and conviction of Kabīr, and no penalty was imposed on him.[136] If the story is true, it would appear that the matter ended in such a way as to have been quietly forgotten. Kabīr had nothing to do with the authorities, neither did he defy them. His sole interest was religion, and he must have told the Sulṭān that he had found the essence of both Hinduism and Islām.

In connection with the story of Kabīr's so-called arraignment before the Sulṭān, Westcott has made a very interesting observation. According to him, the story-teller of Kabīr's life, apparently with sufficient knowledge of the events of Jesus' life, wanted to present some parallels. Thus after an account of the virgin birth, we read that Kabīr as a child gave utterance to his mystery;[137] he raised from the dead a boy and a girl; etc. Finally, "the full account of his appearance before Sikandar Lūdhī", maintains Westcott, "presents in many details a striking resemblance to Christ's trial before Pilate."[138]

It has been mentioned before that the books containing these legends are as late as the nineteenth century, such as the *Kabir*

Shaykh, when warned by his friends of the approach of the Sulṭān almost to the suburbs of the city, is said to have uttered : "*Dilhī hunūj dūr ast* (Delhi is yet far off). The Sulṭān died accidentally at Ghiyās Pur, by the falling of the wooden structure in which he was halting at the last station before his entry into the city. The cause of the accident has been described variously. The religious belief is that it was a curse of the Shaykh Nizām whom the Sulṭān wanted to harass (see HCIP, 58).

135. Cf. Friedmann, Y. R., "Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī : An Outline of his Thought and a Study of his Image in the Eyes of Posterity", Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, 1966.

136. *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

137. See *op. cit.*, p. 5; Keay, p. 10.

138. *Op. cit.*, p. 22.

Kasauti.[139] Therefore, it is not surprising that these writers, who may have been well acquainted with the life of Jesus, would have wanted to show how similar their own spiritual leader's life was. Apparently, having relied on these accounts, George Grierson was led to contend that Christian influence may be detected in Kabīr's teaching.[140] At the same time some of the descriptions of Kabīr also are reminiscent of Kṛṣṇa, for instance, his "lotus eyes;"[141] still others echo Rāma's putting Śītā through the ordeal of fire to prove her purity after her return from her captivity in Laṅka.[142]

At any rate, these legends seem to have no historical value, for they mention the name of Shaykh Taqī who is said to have vindicated the cause of the Muslims and thus has been instrumental in bringing Kabīr before the Sulṭān. But in no standard history books dealing with the Sulṭān and his religious policy is there any mention of either Shaykh Taqī or Kabīr. These legends are probably fabricated by those admirers who felt it was a pious act to glorify their spiritual hero. They even have coined a poem, ascribed to Kabīr, which describes his punishment at the hands of the Sulṭān.[143] However, Kabīr's case is not an exception; adoration and creating of a halo around the head of a dead saint is a well-known universal phenomenon.

KABĪR'S DEATH

Now, to return to Kabīr's life : before his death we have no record of any event of historical significance. All tradition agrees that sometime before his death, Kabīr went to Maghar (in the district of Basti beyond the Ganges : about

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139. For a list of the Kabīrpanthī literature produced within the last one hundred years, or so, see the bibliography in Machwe, pp. 57-59.

140. See "Modern Hinduism and its Debt to the Nestorians", *JRAS*, XXXIX (1907), 325.

141. Cf. Westcott, p. 4.

142. See *ibid*., p. 11; Vyas, S. N., *India in the Rāmāyana Age : A Study of the Social and Cultural Conditions in Ancient India as Described in Valmikī's Rāmāyana*, Delhi, 1967, p. 106.

143. See *Ādi-Granth, Bhairau* 18 cited by Keay, p. 43; *Ādi-Granth, Gauṛī* quoted in Macauliffe, pp. 132-33.

eighty-five miles to the east of Lucknow, and fifteen miles to the west of Gorakhpur), where he died in 1518. Speculations have been made as to the cause of Kabīr's leaving Banares and his going to Maghar. According to one tradition, there was a popular superstition to the effect that all who die at Maghar must be born again as asses; while death at the holy city of Banares is sufficient in itself to bring salvation. Now, in order to act against such superstitious belief, and to prove it false, it is stated, that when Kabīr felt that the time of his departure was drawing nigh, he announced that he was going to Maghar to die. It is further stated that the people urged him not to go to Maghar, and the whole city of Banares was overshadowed with sorrow and grief at the thought of his departure from their midst. Kabīr, however, addressed them as follows :

O people, you are simple of understanding.
As water mingles with water, so Kābīr will
mingle with the dust.
If *Maithul* is your real abode, then your
death will be at Maghar.
One who dies at Maghar will not see death
(i. e. will not be subject to *saṁsāra*).
If he dies elsewhere, he will bring shame on Rāma.
'One who dies at Maghar becomes an ass !' A fine thing,
you have lost your confidence in Rāma !
What is Banares, what the waste land of Maghar,
if Rāma dwells in my heart ?
If Kabīr leaves his body in Banares,
What credit will it be to Rāma ? (*Bijak*, *Śabda* 103).

On the other hand, another popular account says that it was due to the decree of the Sulṭān Sikandar Lūdhī, who wanted to remove Kabīr, for the sake of peace, from Banares where he was subject to controversy and persecution at the hands of the orthodox Hindus and Muslims, that Kabīr left Banares for Maghar. This is probably the substratum beneath the story of his punishment by the Sulṭān. However, we are not sure whether Kabīr was banished by the Sulṭān from Banares or whether he went to Maghar of his own accord either to remove the superstitious belief from people's mind about Maghar, or just to find a place which would give him more peace than the

controversial city of Banares to spend the last days of his life. The matter has been referred to in many verses. In none of the verses, however, is there any allusion to the Sulṭān's inflicting punishment on him. On the contrary, mention is made of the superstitious belief. In the following verses, Kabir expresses his confidence that it was not the place where a person dwells and dies but the relationship which he has to God that is the all-important thing. He thus says :

Say, O Rāma, what is now my state ?
People tell me I had little sense to leave Benares.
[My] whole life is lost in Śivpurī (Banares).
At the time of death I have risen and come to Maghar.
Many years I have practised [devotion] at Kāśī
Death has come on in the dwelling of Maghar.
Kāśī and Maghar I consider as the same.
How shall I come across by slight devotion ?
Saith Kabīr, my guru Rāmānanda, Gaṇeṣa, Śiva,
and all men, know
That Kabīr when dying uttered God's holy name
(*Granth, Gauṛi* 15).

If the hard-hearted one die at Benares,
he is not saved from hell.
If the saint of Hari die at Haramba (Maghar),
he saves his whole relationship (*Granth, Āsā* 32).
If Kabīr leaves his body at Benares,
What obligation is he under to God ?
Saith Kabīr, Hear, O people, let no one make a mistake;
What [difference is there between] Benares and the barren
Maghar, if God be in the heart ? (*Granth, Dhanaṣri* 3).

All these verses are self-explanatory, and thus there is no need of any further explanation as to Kabīr's intention in going to Maghar. There is, however, one point to which attention may be drawn. The account which says that when he realised the end of his life was coming close, he announced that he would go to Maghar to die, is probably designed to parallel the story of Kabīr's death with that of the Buddha who is said to have foretold the time of his death.[144]

144. Cf. Thomas, E. J., LBLH, 145, 147.

The story of Kabīr's death, however does not end here. When Kabīr reached Maghar, he came to the hut of a *sādhu*, situated on the bank of the Ami river. There, lying down, he told the people to close the door of the hut. In the meantime, Rājāh Bīr Sinha, a disciple of Kabīr, having heard that Kabīr had already left Banares and gone to Maghar to die, marched to Maghar with his army, and waited for his arrival. The Muslim ruler of the country, Nawāb Bijlī Khān, also a disciple of Kabīr, on the other hand, made all preparations to welcome Kabīr to his domain. The two rulers, it is stated, came down to the hut where Kabīr was staying. Then Rājah Bīr Sinha is reported to have said; "Gurujī, I will take your body and perform the rites according to the Hindu religion." But the Nawāb said, "I will never allow this to be done; I will bury you according to Muhammadan rites !" When Kabīr saw that the two armies were about to start fighting, he admonished them ; "Be careful, do not discuss this amongst yourselves, and do not use your weapons. He who acknowledges my words will be pleased."[145]

At this stage there are two versions pertaining to the actual death of Kabīr. According to one, after his death, while the Muslim and Hindu followers of Kabīr were disputiug over the possession of his dead body, he appeared in person and asked them to lift the shroud beneath which his body was lying; when they did so, they found nothing but a heap of flowers, of which the Muslims took one half and buried at Maghar, and the Hindus took the other half and cremated at Kabīr Chaura in Banares.[146]

The other story says that Kabīr died after he had talked to Rājāh Bīr Sinha and Bijlī Khān, as has been stated above. When they entered the room where Kabīr had died, nothing was to be seen except two sheets and some flowers in them. One sheet, and half of the flowers, the Rajāh took, which he cremated at Kabīr Chaura in Banares; and the other sheet and the remainder of the flowers were taken by the Nawāb, which he buried at Maghar. It means that the two accounts are

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145. All three quotations are cited in Keay, p. 24.
146. See Westcott, p. 15.

essentially the same. In other words, the body of Kabīr was not seen.[147] In fact, his followers insist that he never had a body but was only a manifestation of glory.[148]

The fact of Kabīr's death is shrouded in such mystery that we are not in a position to say anything other than what we have described above as gleaned from all available sources. We have no other clue even to dare a conjecture otherwise. It may be mentioned here that a similar story also is told about Nānak's corpse. In this case it is also stated that the two shrines built by two rival groups where the remains of Nānak were either cremated or buried, were washed away by the Ravi river, lest idol-worship or else an ancestral cult flourish where the corporeal Nānak died and the formless Nānak had been reborn.[149]

The mention of two rulers, one Hindu and one Muslim, in the story of Kabīr's death, however, may appear to have been designed to lay the basis on which Kabīr's followers split up into two rival camps — Hindu and Muslim, for their names do not occur in any standard books on Indian or Oriental biographies, whereas Kabīr's name is found in almost all records.[150] Of course, it is not impossible that the writers of Indian history could have misread these two names, though it would be unusual because they are reported to have been men of power and position. At any rate, one thing is unmistakably clear, that immediately after Kabīr's death his followers were divided into Hindu and Muslim camps. There is no contradiction among the writers on this point. Even today the two separate shrines — one at Maghar under Muslim panths, and the other at Kabīr Chaura, Banares, under Hindu panths — can be seen.[151]

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147. Cf. Keay, p. 25.

148. See Westcott, p. 5.

149. See Hughes, T. P., *Dictionary of Islām*, London, 1938, p. 588; also see *The Sikhs*, p. 105.

150. Cf. Beale, p. 204.

151. Kshitimohan Sen tells us that according to Dr. Fuhrer's researches, which are recorded in his *Monumental Antiquities and Inscriptions in the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, Kabīr's shrine exists in Khirni in Basti on the river

In summary, although Kabīr himself has not left any record of his life in written form, there is a collection of his sayings entitled the *Bījak* which was compiled by his disciples about fifty years after his death. The *Ādi-Granth* also contains a large number of Kabīr's verses. The two collections seem to have been based on two oral traditions supplied by the followers of Kabīr. The two collections having been compiled independently, there are variations between them. Although these two collections contain genuine sayings of Kabīr, the possibility of some additions made by the followers of Kabīr cannot be ruled out. In addition to these contemporary and near contemporary sources, there are numerous references to Kabīr's life and activity made by the writers of both medieval and modern periods. A reconstruction of Kabīr's life on the basis of information as gathered from all these sources, primary and secondary, including the legends is not impossible.

There are legends about Kabīr's birth. These legends seem to have been originated by his Hindu followers. Although these legends have little historical value, they illustrate the religious beliefs of his followers. There are also legends relating to the name "Kabīr". These stories appear to have been coined by his Muslim followers who think that the name "Kabīr" is something sacred. It must be stressed that the name Kabīr was not so rare as thel egends have made out. No unnecessary or undue impression should be formed about Kabīr just for the name "Kabīr" as something divine. There were many people named Kabīr.

There are also tales told about Kabīr's relation to Sulṭān Sikandar Lūdhī. Obviously, these stories were designed to embellish the spiritual qualities of Kabīr in confrontation with a secular authority. Many stories are also told pertaining to Kabīr's powers of working miracles. But from the internal evidence, we find that Kabīr did not lay claim to supernatural

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Ami. This *raūza* (shrine), according to this writer, was built by Bijli Khān in 1450 and was repaired by Nawāb Fidāi Khān in 1567 (cf. Sen, p. 88). The latter date may be accepted as the date of construction instead of repair, and the former date may be rejected (see Machwe, p. 9).

powers. All the legends are meant to glorify and sanctify the life of a dead saint, Kabīr. This is not an exceptional case. It is true in the case of all dead saints.

Leaving aside the legendary elements associated with Kabīr's life, the hard facts of his life can be outlined thus: He was born in Banares of unknown parentage; he was an illegitimate son probably of a Hindu woman. But he was brought up by a Muslim weaver family of Banares. He was named Kabīr. From his boyhood, he gave expression to spiritual insights. He was mystically oriented, eventually he became associated with many Hindu and Muslim saints of whom Rāmānanda and Shaykh Taqī were outstanding. Kabīr did not identify himself as a Hindu or as a Muslim. He was a weaver of Banares, and a son of Allāh and Rāma. His mission was to break down sectarian differences and to unite the Hindus and the Muslims on one religio-social ground by the cord of a new spirituality. By doing so, he also wanted to resolve the communal and historical tension prevalent between the Hindus and the Muslims of medieval India. His spiritual quest did not prevent him from living a worldly life. He raised a family, and earned livelihood by weaving. At the same time, he was a teacher, a preacher of the religious truth that he came to realise out of his mystical experience. But he himself did not belong to any organised religion — theological or mystical. He was one of the Ṣūfīs and one of the *bhaktas*, yet different from all of them. He gathered followers from both the Hindus and the Muslims.

But the orthodox Hindus as well as the orthodox Muslims, whom Kaƀīr disregarded for their ignorance about the truth of religion, spread the net of hostilities against him. They may even have tried to get him penalised by the Muslim administration on charges of heresy. However, for some uncertain reasons, sometime before his death, he left Banares and went to Maghar where he died in 1518 when he was about 75 years of age. There is a legend about the quarrel of his Hindu and Muslim followers over the possession of his corpse. However, since his dead body was not found, his Hindu and Muslim followers divided into two halves the shrouds and the flòwers that were found where his body was lying. The Muslims buried their

half at Maghar, while the Hindus cremated their half at Kabīr Chaura in Banares. After his death, it is stated that his son Kamāl was approached by his father's followers to organise a sect. But Kamāl rejected the idea saying that such an action on his part would be nothing short of killing the truth uttered by his father, "and the killing of father's truth would be tantamount to killing the father himself spiritually."[152] This, however, did not please Kabīr's followers who split up into Hindu and Muslim camps, thus acting against Kabīr's wishes. The division among his followers is the violation of the most important principle of Kabīr's teaching — the Hindu-Muslim unity — for which he strove.

Notwithstanding this division, Kabīr's memory is still as fresh in people's mind as it was during his lifetime. Kabīr came to be immortal, not for anything else, but for the sincerity of purpose that he expressed through his teaching. "Although Kabīr himself was scarcely more than a feeble voice in the murmuring crowd," says Archer, "his gospel, nevertheless, proved to be a leaven in the total lump."[153] Kabīr's teaching gave a new dimension to the religious life of medieval India. His teaching represents a kind of religious universalism that was unknown in the religious history of India. He was not a mere syncretist as Professor 'Azīz Aḥmad thinks.[154] In fact, his teaching constitutes an interesting subject of comparative religion. Therefore, let us study his teaching in the next chapter, so that we can see for ourselves the real greatness of Kabīr.

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152. Cited by Sen, p. 91.
153. *Op. cit.*, p. 54.
154. *Op. cit.*, p. 141.

CHAPTER V

The Teaching of Kabīr

IT has been emphasised before that although Kabīr was one of the *bhaktas* and one of the Ṣūfīs, he was different in many respects from both of them. Kabīr's uniqueness has been acknowledged by many writers. Comparing him with the *bhaktas*, S.N. Dasgupta observes : "The bhakti cult preached by the *bhaktas* of North India followed by and large the line traced in the *Gītā* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. But one of them, namely Kabīr, followed a different line, though similar to that of the Tamil saints', yet different in its deepest essence."[1]

The main reason for Kabīr's uniqueness was his teaching. Unlike all *bhaktas* and Ṣūfīs, he was not only the first true product of the interaction of Hindu-Muslim ideas but he himself was the real pioneer and ambassador of Hindu and Muslim unity. In order to perform this great task, his teaching had to be different from others'. The novelty of his teaching was inevitable, for he tried to divert the attention of the Indians of his time to a religion of the universal path above the sectarian level — a road which Hindus and Muslims could tread together. No Hindu or Muslim could take exception to such a religion, or better to say such a piety.

Also, Kabīr lived an exemplary life : his Hindu and Muslim mixed upbringing — two streams — both contributed equally to mould his character and manners. Despite the fact that he was influenced by two socio-religious currents, he was far from being jumbled between them, but rather carved out his own way of living. Most Hindu saints, for example, lived in the monastery and practised celibacy; similarly, many Muslim saints (Ṣūfīs, *Darvishes*) lived in *Khānqāh*, and some of them, like Hindu saints, practised celibacy, and even lived in forest like Hindu yogīs. But unlike all of them, Kabīr lived a full family life and earned his livelihood by weaving cloth like an ordinary

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1. HM, 154. Italics are mine.

labourer. Thus Kabīr demonstrated that living a family life was not a barrier to spiritual progress. It is the purity of heart, as he persistently insisted in his teaching, that decides and guides a true *bhakta*.

In the following pages, we propose to deal with the teaching of Kabīr. His teaching can be divided into two broad divisions, viz., (1) his essential religious ideas and (2) his mission of reconciliation — or dialogue between Hinduism and Islām. In the first, we will discuss the leading religious concepts of Kabīr, such as the unity of God, *bhakti*, purity of heart, no authority in religion except God's, freedom from religious formalism, etc. These ideas are unique, for they place Kabīr between Hinduism and Islām. In the second, Kabīr takes his place between Hinduism and Islām as a reconciler. In playing the role of a uniter, he criticises the externalia of both the religions. In denouncing them, he uses his satirical and allegorical style for which he is famous. In this section we will also meet with those ideas of Kabīr which teach how to transcend religious differences in quest of a pure spirituality of inwardness, surrender, truth, sincerity, etc.

However, the two divisions in Kabīr's teaching cannot be maintained in a watertight manner, because he was not a systematic and logically consistent thinker and teacher, as we have already seen. The greatness of Kabīr's teaching is not to be looked for in its literary perfection but in the spirit that it reveals to us. The great Bengalee mystic-poet, Rabindranath Tagore, said, "All the great utterances of man have to be judged not by the letter but by the spirit — the spirit which unfolds itself with the growth of life in history."[2] Kabīr uttered words which came from his heart, his religious experience. These words have been interpreted and reinterpreted since his time, but their meaning has never been exhausted. "The meaning of the living words that came out of the experiences of a great heart", says Tagore, "can never be exhausted by any one system of logical interpretation."[3]

The immortal words of Kabīr will continue to be interpreted

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2. *Sādhanā* : *The Realisation of Life*, New York, 1913, p. vii.
3. *Ibid.*, p. viii.

and reinterpreted as long as our interest in matters of religion persists. Here in this work we will do our best to do justice to his teaching. The criteria of our interpretation of his teaching consist of three crucial points, namely, he was a true product of the interaction of Hindu-Muslim ideas. He wanted to unite the Hindus and the Muslims by a new spirituality which was a synthesis of some elements of both religions, on the one hand, and which showed disregard to both religions — their external rites and observances — on the other. Finally we will judge the significance of Kabīr's teaching in historical perspective.

It is generally held that in his rejection of external religion, Kabīr was more severe toward Hinduism than toward Islām. This notion is the result of inadequate and careless studies of Kabīr's teaching. The fact is that Hinduism has more ritual and ceremony than the simpler religion of Islām. Naturally, Kabīr had to reject more Hindu rituals and practices than he did those of Islām, but as regards the contributions from the two religions that are found in his teaching, the Hindu elements exceed the Islamic.[4] It has been emphasised before that Kabīr was by no means partial to either religion. The nature of Kabīr's teaching may be summarised in the following words :

> He has gazed into the mystery of life and seen the vision of the ineffable light. He brings from the world of beyond a new message for the individual and for society. He dreams of a future purified of inequalities; he preaches a religion based on the only foundation on which faith can stand, namely, personal experience. He brushed aside unhesitatingly the whole paraphernalia of dogma and authority, for his soul is sick of the sorry spectacle of the quarrels of creeds and the worship of empty shells of formal religions. He tolerates no shames and demands reality in the search after God.[5]

In other words, Kabīr would teach us that if we care for truth and spiritual life, we should get rid of all artificial hind-

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4. Cf. Farquhar, J. N., ORLI, 533; Zaehner, R. C., *Hinduism*, New York, 1966, p. 140.
5. Tara Chand, IIIC, 145-46.

rances. We should be true to our own self, and be natural. Truth is natural and free from artifice, and we need not look for it in the external world. It is not to be found in vows, garbs, rituals, ceremonies and sectarianism. Truth remains within. We have to find it out by love and devotion. We must not cherish ill-will towards any one, not injure any life, for God dwells in every creature. To Kabīr, it is the same God; earnestly sought after in all religions which differ only in the way they call upon Him. This makes futile the religious quarrels that go on between Hindus and Muslims. Therefore, give up all quarrels, we are all children of one God, to whom we must direct our *bhakti* with heart and soul. We should have our hearts filled with divine love and devotion. This life is not permanent, but temporary. So without losing time in vain pursuits seek refuge with God. We need not seek Him in the external world by performing rituals and ceremonies; we must seek Him within our hearts where He dwells.

KABĪR'S SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

Before coming up with any clear concept of God, man and his relations with God, Kabīr seems to have been passing through the stages of spiritual crisis and bewilderment. As a positive thinker, we find him confronting the great mysteries of life, and reacting to them. Thus he says:

The string is broken (life has departed),
thy brain destroyed; whither hath thy speech gone?
I feel this anxiety night and day; who will
explain and ease my mind? (*Ādi-Granth, Gauṛī* 52).

The answers he heard from Hindu and Muslim religious persons brought him no peace of mind and satisfaction. They appear to him to be too insistent on the externals of religion and the tiresome round of ritual and ceremony, which he despises as hollow and sham. He, however, finds solace for his mind by turning inward :

Saith Kabīr, my attention is directed to that
place where God dwelleth night and day ;
His secret He Himself fully knoweth; He is
ever imperishable (*Ādi-Granth, Gauṛī* 52).

Kabīr has described his spiritual awakening metaphorically in the following verses :

Kabīr being beaten cried much; in pain he
cries [even] more.
[After] a blow has hit the vital part,
Kabīr remained dead on the spot.
Kabīr says, the blow of the spear is easy,
in being applied it takes away the breath.
[But he who] undergoes the blow of the Śabda —
of that guru I am the slave (*Ādi-Granth*, *Ślokas* 182, 183).[6]

The above verses appear to imply that the *Śabda* (Word) of the *guru* which brought to him enlightenment seemed like a heavy blow. This expression is reminiscent of what we know of the prophets, like Muḥammad and Moseṡ, when they received the first revelation.[7] Kabīr tells us that all his former ignorance and wrong ideas were brought to an end (ground), as with a heavy blow, under which he fainted away. The state of Kabīr prior to the occurrence of this experience came to an end; and now Kabīr finds himself as if he was born with new ideas. This is the spiritual experience which seems to have made Kabīr a

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6. Quoted by Keay, F. E., RLIKF, 46.
M. A. Macauliffe translates the two Ślokas as follows :
Kabir, they who are subdued *by worldly love*
utter many cries, but different is the cry of the pir :
Kabir who was struck on a vulnerable spot
fell where he stood (*Śloka*, 182).
Kabir, slight is the stroke of a lance;
though struck by it man may breathe *for a time*;
But he who can endure the stroke of the Word is a guru,
and I am his slave (*Śloka* 183 : cf. SR, VI, 306.)

7. According to a belief in Islām, when Prophet Muḥammad received his first revelation, he was so gripped that he was feeling feverish. He rushed to his wife Khadijah, and asked her to wrap him with a blanket. It is also commonly held that on some occasions when Muḥammad was receiving revelations, he would be gripped by a feeling of pain, and in his ears there would be a voice like the reverberation of a bell (see Watt, W. M., *Muḥammad: Prophet and Statesman*, London, Oxford, 1961, reprinted 1967, p. 18). And according to a biblical story, recorded in the Qur'ān, Moses was struck by his first experience of God's ray at the foot of the Mount Sainai. In this verse Kabir appears to be telling that he had some experience like those of Muḥammad and Moses. Kabir was not the first mystic to express such an experience.

religious teacher and a reformer. In another place Kabīr has described his spiritual awakening more clearly :

Lo ! my brethern, a storm of divine knowledge
hath come;
The screens of doubt have all been blown away,
and even the ropes of mammon have not been left;
The two props of indecision (whether man inclines to
God or the world) have been thrown down,
and the beam of worldly love hath been broken;
The thatched roof of avarice hath fallen to the
ground, and the vessel of evil inclinations
hath burst.
Saith Kabīr, thy slave, O Lord, hath become saturated
by the rain (internal happiness) which fell
after the storm.
And when *next* he saw the sun appear (when he saw God
after the attainment of divine knowledge),
his mind was illumined (*Ādi-Granth, Gauṛī and Soraṭha* 43).

After this spiritual awakening, Kabīr tells us that he felt so much absorbed in God that he gave up all religious rites and ceremonies which he used to perform before. Thus he says :

O Brother ! when I was forgetful, my true
Guru showed me the Way.
Then I left off all rites and ceremonies,
I bathed no more in the holy water :
Then I learned that it was I alone who
was mad, and the whole world beside me
was sane; and I had disturbed these wise
people.
From that time forth I knew no more how to
roll in the dust in obeisance :
I do not ring the temple bell :
I do not set the idol on its throne :
I do not worship the image with flowers.
It is not the austerities that mortify
the flesh which are pleasing to
the Lord,
When you leave off your clothes and kill
your senses, you do not please the Lord :

The man who is kind and who practises
righteousness, who remains passive
amidst the affairs of the world,
who considers all creatures on earth
as his own self,
He attains the Immortal Being, the true
God is ever with him.
Kabīr says : 'He attains the true Name whose
words are pure, and who is free from
pride and conceit.' (Tagore, poem 65).

Since there is no evidence that Kabīr ever practised those Hindu rites mentioned, scholars doubt the authenticity of this poem. It is true that from his very boyhood, Kabīr appears to have been opposed to Hindu and Muslim religious rites and ceremonies. The contents of this poem may be taken as expressing Kabīr's mind, that is, he would not perform these rites even in his thoughts let alone in reality.

KABĪR'S CONCEPT OF GOD: RĀMA OR ALLĀH : THE UNITY OF GOD

After his spiritual awakening, one of the fundamental ideas which Kabīr expressed in clear terms is his concept of God. It is generally held that under the influence of Ṣūfīsm, Kabīr denounced idolatry, image worship and polytheism, and adopted the strong monotheism of Islām. As a result, he at first taught and emphasised the unity (*tawḥīd*) of God. Hence Kabīr says :

He is one : there is no second (*Bijak Śabda* 43; also
cf. Q. 2.255; 3.2-4, 6; 112.1; etc.).
Rāma, Khudā, Śakti, Śiva, are one: tell me,
pray, how will you distinguish them ? (*Bijak*, *Śabda* 48).
By the One name I hold fast : this Kabīr
proclaims aloud (*Bijak*, *Śabda* 62).
In heaven, the realms below, in earth and waters,
one alone, Rāma, watches over all (*Bijak*, *Rāmāiṇi* 59).
Saith Kabīr, I have searched in heaven,
And have seen none equal to God (*Ādi-Granth*, *Gauṛi* 34;
also cf. Q. 112.3).

The one Name, like the tree of life,
saveth *mankind.*
They who are regenerated by God shall
never alter.
Saith Kabīr, I have recognized God's name
(*Ādi-Granth, Gauri* 37).

Having given a simple description of the oneness of God, Kabīr tells us that the different appelations of God are only expressions of one and the same truth. According to him, it matters little by what name we call Him. Thus he says :

Brother ! From where have the two masters of the Universe come ? Tell me, who has invented the names of Allāh, Rāma, Keshab, Hari and Hazrat ? All ornaments of gold are made of a unique substance. It is to show to the world that two different signs are made, one is called Namāz while the other is termed Pūjā. Mahādev and Muḥammad are one and the same; Brahmā and Adam are one and the same, what is a Hindu ? What is a Turk ? Both inhabit the same earth. One reads the Veda, and the other the Qur'ān and the *Khuṭbah* :[8] One is a Mawlānā (*Mawlawi* or *Mullāh*) and the other a Paṇḍit. Earthen vessels have different names, although they are made from the same earth. Kabīr says : both are misled, none has found God (*Bijak, Śabda* 30, also see 97).

As we can see, Kabīr's idea of one God and one humanity is truly Islamic. As a matter of fact, this is the key conception of Kabīr according to which he refused to find any distinction between Hindus and Muslims, and on the basis of this unity in principle and substance, he tried to find a *modus vivendi* between the two communities. By using terms employed by both systems, Kabīr tells us that it is only the difference in names. Finally, in the Upaniṣadic style, Kabīr tells us that the Hindus and the Muslims are only different manifestations of the same substance. Therefore, they are the children of one God.

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8. Literally *Khuṭbah* means "speech", but technically it refers to that speech which the *Imām* (leader) of the Friday congregational prayer delivers from the pulpit. Usually it is a printed speech. But the modern *imāms* deliver *khuṭbah* prepared by themselves in their own language with relevant references to both the Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth*.

Elsewhere Kabīr again takes up the subject of the unity of God, and criticises the Hindus and the Muslims who conceive of different gods. Thus he says :

Rāma, Khudā, Śakti, Śiva are one. Then to whom
do the prayers go ? The Vedas, the Purāṇas and the
Qur'ān are only different manners of description.
Neither the Hindu, nor the Turk, neither the Jain
nor the Yogi is cognizant of the secret (*Bījak, Śabda* 28,
also cf. 48).

In an allegorical verse, Kabīr in his humorous style says :

You are the wife of one, but have become the
prostitute of many; say with whose corpse will
you be burnt ? for you are the wife of many.[9]

It means there is one God whom men should love; but what will be the fate of those who love and worship many gods who are false. In the above verses the concept of *sati* has been mentioned which Kabīr rejected totally. It may be an interpolation; or otherwise Kabīr may have used it because the Hindus believe in it.

In another place Kabīr elaborates the theme of God's omnipresence and condemns the narrow-mindedness of the two communities who try to keep God confined to their respective places, whereas Kabīr asserts that God is universal and is present everywhere especially in the human heart. Thus he says:

If God dwelleth only in the mosque, to whom
belongeth the rest of the country ?
They who are called Hindus *say* that God dwelleth
in an idol : I see not the truth in either sect.
O God, whether Allāh or Rāma, I live by Thy name,
O Lord, show kindness unto me.
Hari dwelleth in the south, Allāh hath His
place in the West.[10]

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9. Cited by Westcott, G.H., KKP, 60.

10. By "South" Kabīr might have meant the Jagannath temple at Purī, Orissa, or southern India which took the initiative for the *bhakti* movement in the medieval period. "Allāh hath His place in the West", by this Kabīr refers to Indian Muslims' attitude to their holy place in Mecca which is to the West of India. Also see Tagore, R., *One Hundred Poems of Kabīr*, London, 1962, poems 1 and 69.

Search in thy heart, search in thy heart of
hearts; there is His place and abode.
... ...
... ...
The men and women Thou has created, *O God*,
are all in Thy form.
Kabīr, is the child of Rām and Allāh, and
accepteth all gurus and pīrs.
Saith Kabīr, hear, O men and women, seek the
sanctuary of the one God;
O mortals, only repeat God's name, and then
shall you be assuredly saved (*Ādī-Granth*, *Prabhatī* 2).

As we can see, in these verses, apart from asserting the oneness of God, His omnipresence, and in a typical mystical tone finding the human heart as the abode of God, Kabīr affirmed that he was neither a Hindu nor a Muslim, but a child of the one God who is known by different names. This aspect of Kabīr's teaching must be remembered in order to understand him and his mission. In the last verse, he has struck another important note of his teachings, namely, repetition of God's name (*dhikr*) which is a characteristic feature of Ṣūfī teaching as well as of Rāma *bhakti*. We shall return to this point later.

Although Kabīr believes in the unity of God, he uses many names for God, but the name which recurs most in his sayings is Rāma. His use of other names occasionally should not delude us that he supported the idea of polytheism. On the contrary, by this means he would bring people to realise that although they might use different names, there is only one God. Because of the name Rāma, some may have thought that Kabīr was a Hindu. But as R. C. Zaehner says, the "deification of Rāma had already gone so far that his name had become a synonym for God."[11] However, in order to remove all ambiguity and confusion, Kabīr has articulated his conception of Rāma in the following verses :

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11. *Hinduism*, p. 140.

The Creator did not marry Sītā nor did he
make a stone bridge across the waters (*Bījak*, *Śabda* 8).
They say the Lord of the world finding
inequalities of the weak and the strong
came as Rāma. But Kabīr says, before such
a one (Rāma) who took birth and died,
I cannot bend my head.[12]

In another place Kabīr says :

Follow the true *Sāḥib* (God) who will uphold you
in all your trials.
He was not born in Daśaratha's family and did
not oppress the king of Laṅka (Ceylon).
He did not fight with king Bāli nor did he kill
Hiraṇyākṣa, throwing him down on the ground.[13]

Still in another place Kabīr says :

All say 'Rām, Rām,' but there is difference
in the saying; one associated with many,
another [Kabīr] was absorbed in one.[14]

The above couplet seems to distinguish between Rāma, the son of king Daśaratha of antiquity, and Rāma, as used as a title of the one true God. In his verses rejecting the doctrine of *avatāra* of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, Kabīr has also made it absolutely clear that his God, Rāma, did not take birth in the family of king Daśaratha, as we shall see later. Hence J. C. Archer says, "He sometimes called on God Rāma, but qualified this title — by excluding Sītā or any other consort or companion, and by denying that Rāma was himself an avatāra of God. By 'Rāma', he meant not the epic hero, the son of king Daśaratha, but the True Guru, the one God, the True Name."[15] Thus "Through the principle of the unity of God," says Yūsuf Ḥusain, "Kabīr did much to elevate the social and moral level of the Hindu society of the time."[16]

It has been emphasised before that Kabīr was above and beyond all partisan statement. There is no reason to doubt

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12. Cited by Tara Chand, p. 163.
13. Quoted by Westcott, p. 39.
14. Cited in *ibid.*, p. 65.
15. The Sikhs, 51-52.
16. GMIC, 25.

that he transcended religious differences as he never showed any preference for either of the two religions. But his use of different names for God, mostly Hindu names, and his mention of some Hindu deities and narrations of stories connected with them simply indicate his acquaintance with both the religions. This kind of expression may, however, appear to us as contradiction and inconsistency. This may be the case, but modern standards of scholarship cannot be applied to his words. He was neither a scholar nor a profound philosopher, but a simple religious teacher and reformer, and wanted to reform what he thought was wrong. In doing so, he kept himself completely free from sectarian outlook and dogmatic mentality.

The above sayings bring out another important point: that, having transcended religious differences, and in his intense desire to see all religions united, Kabīr did not make any distinction between the two faiths, and thus accepted all *gurus* and *pīrs*. This point should remove the doubt as to whether or not Kabīr had any association with Muslim *pīrs* (Ṣūfīs). For the synthetic nature of his teaching, Kabīr has won an undisputed recognition as the best representative of the trend engendered by the interaction of Hindu-Muslim ideas, though the former ideas were predominant in him. Hence one writer says, "It seems to have been Kabīr's intention to found a religion that was inhibited by neither dogma, nor scripture, nor social framework. In spirit he is far more Hindu than Muslim,....."[17]

Having affirmed the unity of God, in a true Ṣūfīstic vein, Kabīr describes God, as being near to man :

He (God) whom you seek is near you (cf. Q. 50.15).
He is always near to his [*sic*] devotees and
far from those who do not worship Him.[18]

KABĪR'S CONCEPT OF ONE HUMANITY

Following on his view of one God, Kabīr preached the equality of all men. Egalitarianism is the second great

17. *Hinduism*, p. 140.
18. Cited by Westcott, p. 31.

principle of Islām which Kabīr accepted under the influence of Ṣūfīsm. When the low-caste weaver Kabīr began preaching to men of high caste the principle of equality of all men, he was reproached for his daring. Upon this he preached the following :

As the bubbles of the river are accounted water
and blend with the water of the ocean,
So the man who looketh on all with an equal eye,
shall become pure and blend with the Infinite.
Why should I return *to this world* ?
Transmigration taketh place by God's order;
he who obeyeth it shall blend with Him.
When this fabric of five elements perisheth,
my wandering shall be at an end.
Forswearing sects, I look on all as equal
and meditate on the one Name.
I devote myself to and perform the duties
which God assigned me.
If God bestow mercy on me, I shall be absorbed
in Him under the instruction of my guru.
He who in life is in death, and who from death
(being dead toward God) returneth to life
shall not be born again.
Saith Kabīr, he who is permeated with the Name
fixeth his love on God (*Ādi Granth, Marū* 4).

In the penultimate verse Kabīr has spoken of that famous doctrine of Ṣūfīsm, namely, *fanā fī Allāh* (dying in God) resulting in *baqā bi Allāh* (living in God eternally). The doctrine has some similarity with the Buddhist concept of Nirvāṇa, and the Ṣūfīs may have taken it from the Buddhist monks of Central Asia as we have discussed. But there is also an implicit reference to it in the Qur'ān (55.26). Kabīr apparently took this doctrine from the Ṣūfīs. The eternal living in God should not be misunderstood for living in heaven or paradise. It is rather continuance of spiritual absorption in Him, for the Ṣūfīs do not hanker for heaven but only for God's love.

In another place Kabīr speaks of one humanity in the following words:

I and you are of one blood, and one life animates us both; from one mother is the world born; what knowledge is this which makes us separate.

All have come from the same country and have landed at one *ghāṭ*, but the evil influences of this world have divided us into innumerable sects.[19]

From whence have Hindus and Turks come ?
By whom have these ways been started ?
Having searched and reflected in thy mind tell me.
By whom have Paradise and Hell been made.[20]

If your Khudā wished circumscision, he would have sent you circumcised into the world.

If by circumcision you become a Muslim in that case what should you do with your women ?

A woman is said to be the half of man; being so, would she remain a Hindu ?

If by wearing the sacred thread a man becomes a Brāhmin then do your women wear ?

They by birth are Shūdrins, why should you being a Pande take the meal placed by them before you ?

Whence have the Hindus and Muslims come ?
Who has started these religious systems ?
Think well in your hearts who has obtained heaven.
O mad man, give up the illusion of this world.
O brethren, you resist (the warnings of conscience).

Kabīr is on the road to God and is marching on to His end, forsaking all partial views.[21]

As we can see, Kabīr took great pains to try to articulate his view about the unity of human beings. According to him, while the religious differences are only fortuitous the essential humanity is always the same. And when Kabīr says that "all have come from the same country", that is, it was all one human, thus one nation, "but the evil influences of this world have divided us into innumerable sects", his conception of the oneness of human beings is in conformity with that of the Qur'ān (cf. 2.213). Hence he says :

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
21. *Ibid.*

O Saints ! I have seen the ways of both. In their
pride the Hindu and the Turk do not recognize me. . . .
The way of the Hindu and Muslim is the same.
The Satguru (God) has revealed it to me. Hear
what Kabīr says : Rāma and Khudā are one and the same.
(*Bijak*, *Śabda* 10).

Finally, in accordance with his concept of one human race, Kabīr forcefully and with reasoned arguments denounced the Hindu caste system. In his efforts to convince the Hindus about the reality of one humanity, Kabīr traced the beginning of the human race to Adam and says :

Adam who was first, did not know
Whence came mother Eve.
Then there was no Turk (Muslim) nor Hindu; . . .
Then there was no race, no caste.
If thou thinkest the Maker distinguished castes :
Birth is according to these penalties for deeds.
Born a Śūdra, you die a Śūdra;
It is only in this world of illusion that you assume
the sacred thread.
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
If you milk black and yellow cows together,
Will you be able to distinguish their milk (*Bijak*, *Ramaini* 62).

KABĪR'S CONCEPT OF ŚABDA

The *Śabda* (the Word), is one of the most important elements in the essential doctrines of Kabīr. As we know, in orthodox Hindu thought knowledge can be obtained by perception and inference. So is the case with Buddhism and Jainism.[22] To these has been added *Śabda* (word or verbal testimony) which has been accepted as one of the *pramāṇas* (proofs, evidences) by the orthodox schools of Indian philosophy. *Śabda* implies both divine word or inspiration and the word of a trustworthy person, particularly *guru*. In Islām, the Qur'ān — the Word of God — is the first and only authority; no other word is recognised as authentic unless it is in conformity with the Qur'ān.

22. Cf. Sharma, C., CSIP, 48-49, 130-34.

In the case of Kabīr, since he clearly rejected the authority of the Vedas as well as of the Qur'ān, his doctrine of *Śabda* cannot refer to any written scriptures. In one place Kabīr said, "I neither touched ink nor paper, nor did I take a pen into my hand, to the sages of all four ages Kabīr declared his word by mouth (*Bījak*, *Sākhī* 188). *Śabda* is thus the mysterious utterance of speech that conveys knowledge of the unknown and leads the wise unto salvation. But from the context of the texts where the term *Śabda* occurs, undoubtedly it is especially associated with the name of God — the 'Satnām', which is recognised in his doctrines as so powerful. For instance, Kabīr says, "I am a lover of the word which has shown me the unseen (God)."[23] Commenting on this saying of Kabīr, one writer says, "This is a far simpler thing on Kabīr's lips than the *Śabda pramāṇa* of the schools of philosophy."[24] Speech was obviously the medium through which the expression of the unknowable is made. However, in some passages Kabīr says that the "word" helped him to know God. Here undoubtedly he means inspiration. We have no hesitation in believing that Kabīr underwent some mystical experience. Still in other places Kabīr says that the "Word" of the *guru* opened his eyes and mind to know God; again, in some cases he identifies *Śabda* with God. In any case, this mysterious doctrine of Kabīr must be understood from its context. For the most part it refers to God or an inspired word of God, like the *waḥyi*, the inspired word of God, Prophet Muḥammad and all other prophets received, and by no means alludes to either the Vedas or to the Qur'ān.[25] Below are some illustrations of his way of using his doctrine of *Śabda* :

> There are many words and there is a great difference between them; accept the true word. Kabīr says, one who has found the true word, has no pleasure in this life. By the power of the word the sin of this world is destroyed. The word makes kings forsake their kingdoms. He who has investigated the

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23. Cited by Westcott, p. 69.
24. Macnicol, N., RQIIT, 140.
25. See Keay, pp. 87-88; Carpenter, J. E., *Theism in Medieval India* (being the "Hibbert Lecture, Second Series", delivered in 1919, London) appended to Westcott, pp. 127-28.

word has done his work well. Without hearing the word it is utter darkness. Say, whither shall anyone go; without finding the gateway of the word, man will ever be astray. My word is of the word; hear it, go not astray. If man wishes to know the truth, let him investigate the word. There are many words, but take the pith of them; he who takes not the essence says Kabīr, will live a profitless life.[26]

In another place, it appears that Kabīr explicitly uses the conception of Word for God. It seems that the theme of his saying resulted from a mystical experience of God whom he found impossible to describe in words; and whom he realised to be beyond all visible forms, unseen, unconfined, limitless. No human speech can show forth His fulness :

O how may I ever express that secret Word ?
O how can I say He is not like this, He is like that ?
If I say that He is within me, the universe is ashamed:
If I say that He is without me, it is falsehood.
He makes the inner and the outer worlds to be invisibly one;
The conscious and the unconscious both are His footstools.
He is neither manifest nor hidden, He is neither revealed nor unrevealed;
There are no words to tell that which He is.[27]

There is no doubt that Kabīr took the conception of *Śabda* from Hinduism, but he used it in a different way. This way of using the doctrine is probably designed to make a distinction from the Hindu schools of philosophy. At any rate, in the abọve poems, all ambiguity has been removed when Kabīr, in the very mood of the Upaniṣads, says that the word cannot be described either as this or that, just as the Upaniṣads say, *neti, neti* (cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 3.9.26; 4.2.4; 4.4.22; 4.5.15). In another place Kabīr says :

I have wept for this world but no one has
wept with me; he alone will weep with
me who understood the Word.[28]

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26. Quoted by Westcott, pp. 44-45.
27. Tagore, poem 9; also cited by Carpenter in Westcott, pp. 124-25.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 45.

By citing these verses on the doctrine of *Śabda*, we wished to demonstrate how Kabīr picked up ideas from Hinduism and used them in his own way. Similarly, he picked up the Qur'ānic conception of God as the Light (cf. 24.35 ff.). This light-verses and what follows it have been the most celebrated verses of the Qur'ān for the Ṣūfīs. Thus under the influence of Ṣūfīsm, Kabīr conceives God as the Light which has an affinity for the light of man (cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 4.3.6), and they are inseparable :

Can one light which is absorbed in another
be separated from it ?
May that man burst and die in whose heart
the name of God springeth not up.
Dark and beautiful God, my soul is attached to Thee.
When a holy man is found, supernatural perfection
is obtained; this is both union with God
and worldly enjoyment.

. . . . . .

He who attentively heareth or singeth God's name,
Saith Kabīr, shall certainly obtain the supreme
state at last (*Ādi Granth*, *Gauṛi* 55).

At this stage we are faced with another important problem in Kabīr's doctrine. There is a great deal of controversy among the modern scholars as to whether or not Kabīr can be regarded as a philosopher. Let us discuss this dispute.

KABĪR AND PHILOSOPHY

It has been emphasised before that Kabīr was not at all a philosopher and was unable to maintain a logical consistency in his utterances. This contention has been affirmed by writers like F. E. Keay.[29] J. E. Carpenter maintains the same view.[30] G. H. Westcott says that the impression that Kabīr was a pantheist or a monist is based on two incorrect assumptions: (1) that he is responsible for all the teachings given by his Hindu followers at a later age and (2) that all the

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29. *Op. cit.*, p. 71.
30. In Westcott, p. 118.

statements contained in the *Bijak* represent his personal views.[31] According to this writer, Kabīr was neither a pantheist nor a monist but a theist. Philosophy was not an accomplishment of Kabīr. In fact, he deprecated mere philosophical discussions which lead to nothing. But on the basis of some of Kabīr's sayings like the above quoted ones in which he seems to have conceived of absolute identity between God and man, and his discussions on concepts like *Śabda*, *Māyā*, etc., some writers, such as Aḥmad Shāh, find in his utterances the doctrines of monism.[32] However, the matter does not seem to be that easy to decide in either way exclusively. The fact remains that Kabīr did not have any formal schooling, but that does not necessarily preclude the possibility of his hearing philosophical ideas from others as he learned many theological ideas from Hindu and Muslim saints. And it is not impossible that he could have expressed some philosophical ideas, even though he rejected its formal systems. The fact is that he was not interested in philosophical and metaphysical discussions as the Buddha was not. Further, Kabīr has not drawn a philosophical or metaphysical conclusion to his concept of God. And whatever philosophical ideas he has expressed, we do not find any consistency in his sayings. At any rate, as a theist, Kabīr probably could not adhere to the spiritual monism of Śaṅkara. As a mystic, Kabīr's aim was to have a union with God and not to find out the identity of *ātman* and *Brahman*. Like all mystics, Kabīr advocates the doctrine of union with the Divine where the individual self still retains some difference. In this sense, Kabīr's formula is close to that of Rāmānuja and that of the Ṣūfīs. Below is a passage in which Kabīr appears to have discarded the famous Upaniṣadic doctrine of complete identity of *ātman* and *Brahman*, yet the rejection does not make him a theist exclusively :

Tat tvam asi[33] is the preaching of the Upaniṣads;
that is their message.

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31. *Op. cit.*, p. 23.
32. See Keay, pp. 71-73.
33. "Thou art That" i.e., Thou (the human soul : *ātman*) art one with That (Divine Spirit : *Brahman*). (cf. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.8.7; 6.15.3)

Great is their reliance upon this; but how can they,
however mighty, describe Him? (*Bījak*, *Ramainī* 8).
Pandits, your thoughts are all untrue;
there is here no universe and no creator;
Nor subtle, nor gross, nor air, nor fire, nor sun,
nor moon, nor earth, nor water;
Nor the form of light, nor *Kāl* (time) are there:
there is neither word nor body.
There is neither action nor virtue,
no mantras and no worship at all.
Rites and ceremonies have no worth at all.
He is one, there is no second (*Bijak*, *Śabda* 43; also
cf. Q. 2.255; 3.2; ch.112)
Wherever, wherever one looks, there, there is He
the same; He is found in every vessel (*Bijak*, *Śabda* 27).
How can I explain His form or outline?
there is no second who has seen Him.
How can I describe the condition of the unconditioned,
who has neither village nor resting-place?
He who must be seen without qualities;
by what name shall I call Him? (*Bījak*, *Ramainī* 6, 7;
also cf. *Ādi Granth*, *Gauṛi* 9).
When the fire *of avarice* is out, and the smoke
of desires no longer issueth,
Then shall man know that one God is everywhere
contained, and that there is no second (*Ādi Granth*, *Āsā* 11).

Here is a conception which embraces all the contraries of life, and transcends them all. In other words, Kabīr's conception of God can be likened partly to that of Islām and partly to the *nirguṇa* (attributeless) *Brahman* of the Upaniṣads. But we certainly cannot put his theology into the realm of the pure monism of Śaṅkara. In fact, although Kabīr has used some Upaniṣadic conceptions pertaining to the Ultimate Reality, yet he has not given his adherence exclusively to "Thou art That". This is not surprising, for the Upaniṣadic conception of *Brahman* is an abstraction, which is to be contemplated rather than worshipped, for which a personal God possessing attributes (*saguṇa*) is needed. Kabīr being a monotheist and theistic *bhakta*, advocating personal devotion (*bhakti*) to a

personal God, whom he called Rāma, could not have been in full agreement with monism. The only point of concurrence between him and the Vedānta, or Buddhism, is that God or the Absolute is beyond any description in human language and word.

The God to whom Kabīr directed his *bhakti* is not a mere abstraction. In other places, Kabīr used attributes to describe Him. He is the saviour, merciful, joyous, beautiful, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, perfect, etc. Notwithstanding God is powerful, Kabīr, like all mystics, conceived of Him as One with whom man can have intercourse; and using the expression common in mysticism, especially that of Nammāḷvar, he declares:

I am Thy son, Thou art my Father;
We both live in the same place (*Ādi Granth, Āsā* 3).

Taking into consideration the diverse ways in which Kabīr tried to give expression to his conception of the One God, it must be admitted that his conception of God cannot be judged according to any philosophical standard. In fact, he, in line with the Vedānta and the Mādhyamika Buddhist doctrine, says that He is beyond all philosophy; "for philosophy cannot attain to Him."[34]

There are, however, other verses in which Kabīr expressly describes God as a personal God, and conceives of Him as Light in the same manner as the Ṣūfīs on the basis of the Qur'ān (24.35-36). Thus he says:

God constructed an inaccessible fortress (brain ?)
for His residence,
Which He illumined with His light (intelligence or
consciousness).
. . . . . .
He who fashioned continents and different
countries,
The three worlds, the three *gods*, and the
three qualities (*guṇas*),
Though styled inaccessible and invisible,
dwelleth within the heart.

34. Cited by Carpenter in Westcott, p. 130.

None can find the limit or the secret of the
Sustainer of the earth ;
He shineth in the plantain blossom and
in the sunshine,
And hath taken His dwelling in the pollen
of the lotus.
God's spell is within the twelve petals of the heart
Where the holy Lord of Lakshmi reposeth.
The great God reacheth from the lower to the
upper regions of the firmament;
He illumineth the silent realm,
Where there is neither sun nor moon.
He was in the beginning; He is without stain and happy.
Know that He pervadeth the body as well as the universe;
He batheth in Mansarowar (the lake of the heart);
His pass-word is 'Soham' (I am He) (*Ādi Granth*, *Aṣṭapadi* 1).

The earth bloometh, the firmament rejoiceth;
Every heart is gladdened by God's light.
The Lord God rejoiceth in endless ways;
Whithersoever I look, there is He contained (*Ādi Granth*, *Basant* 1; also cf. Q. 2.109).

Kabīr appears to have reflected deeply on the nature of God and the world. The first result of the mystical contemplation of this vast universe was the intense conviction of the omnipresence of God. Commenting on the above verses, Carpenter remarks : "But this was not the monist doctrine of identity. The ancient formula 'That art Thou' is expressly repudiated. The reality of the world cannot be denied, for it would involve the denial of its Infinite Cause."[35] In the introduction to Tagore's *One Hundred Poems of Kabir*, E. Underhill observes that Kabīr's idea of God is "the synthetic vision of God", where the contrast between the Absolute of philosophy and the "sure true Friend" of devotional religion is carried up to a higher plane where it disappears in light.[36] The uniqueness of Kabīr's teaching comes out clearly in his synthetic view of

35. *Op. cit.*, in Westcott, p. 124.
36. *Op. cit.*, p. xv.

God; and this synthetic view appears to be most appropriate for Kabīr whose mission was to make a synthesis of Hinduism and Islām.

KABĪR'S VIEW OF KARMA AND SAṀSĀRA

Like the monotheism and the egalitarianism of Islām which Kabīr absorbed from the Ṣūfīs, and incorporated them in his own teaching, he also borrowed from Hinduism some of its basic principles. He seems to have held fast to two fundamental doctrines of Hinduism, namely, *Karma* (actions : good or bad) and *Saṁsāra* (transmigration of the soul). Of course, these are not peculiarities of Hinduism alone, rather they are the fundamental principles of the whole Indian spiritual tradition. The goal of the teachings of the Upaniṣads is to secure *mokṣa* (release or salvation) from the cyclic order of life, death and rebirth to which the law of *Karma* or the results of our actions bind us. This twin doctrine seems to have attracted Kabīr's notice. According to him, as in the Indian tradition, a man is bound by his actions, and every act is productive of future good or ill. Evil deeds destine a man to punishment by his being born in a lower state of life in his next birth. But the weary round of births and rebirths goes on till the chain of *saṁsāra* is cut through the results of good actions, and thus is achieved salvation. Here Kabīr speaks on the doctrine of metempsychosis :

I was in immobile and mobile creatures,
in worms and in moths ;
I passed through many births of various kinds.
In this way I occupied many bodies,
But when, O God, I assumed *human* birth,
I was a Yogī, a Jatī, a penitent, a Brahmachārī,
Sometimes a king, an emperor, and sometimes
a beggar (*Ādi Granth, Gauṛī* 13).

In another place Kabīr tells us that he has found God (*mukti*) and thus put an end to his transmigration :

Though I have assumed many shapes, this is my last.
The strings and wires of the musical instrument
are all worn out;

I am now in the power of God's name ;
I shall not have again to dance *to the tune*
of birth and death;
Nor shall my heart accompany on the drum.
I have taken and destroyed my bodily lust and anger;
the pitcher of avarice hath burst;
Lust's raiment hath grown old, and all my
doubts are dispelled.
I recognize one God in all creatures;
vain wranglings *on this subject* are at an end.
Saith Kabīr, when God was gracious unto me,
I obtained Him, the Perfect One (*Ādi Granth*, *Āsā* 28).
All men bound by their acts transmigrate; attentively consider
this (*Ādi Granth*, *Gauṛi* 50).
Since my attention is fixed on God, I no longer suspect that I
shall suffer transmigration (*Ādi Granth*, *Bilawalu* 11).
My dread of transmigration is at an end
Since God displayed His love for me.
The light hath dawned, the darkness is dispelled;
I have obtained the jewel God by meditation on Him.
When *He conferreth* happiness sorrow fleeth away;
The jewel of my heart is absorbed in God's love
(*Ādi-Graṇth. Prabhāti* 1).

Elsewhere Kabīr says :

Birth is in accordance with penalties for deeds
(*Bijak*, *Ramaini* 62).
Through wanderings and error man comes again to his house.
(*Bijak*, *Ramaini* 25)
The soul plays in many forms — in various garbs;
Men like bees are swept away.
After birth and death, it comes again into a body.
(*Bijak*, *Ramaini* 84).
On account of Karma, one appeared in the womb
(*Bijak*, *Ramaini* 39).
Having wandered through the 84 lakhs of wombs he has come into the world; now having gone out of the body he has no spot nor place (i.e. he is liberated and thus no longer subject to time and space as he was during the *sāṁsāric* life),

Clear away the pain of birth and death, the pleasure of works, that the soul may be liberated from rebirth.[37]

As we see from these verses, Kabīr has used the doctrines of *Karma* and *Saṁsāra* in the same way as it is used in the Indian tradition. Under the influence of Hinduism some Ṣūfīs even before Kabīr came to believe in the transmigration of the soul. But these Ṣūfīs did not use it along with the Hindu doctrine of *Karma*, though the idea of good works (*a'māl-i-ṣāliḥa*), always mentioned along with faith (*imān*), is the recurrent theme of the Qur'ān, necessary for salvation (*najāt*). Kabir's use of the twin doctrine of *Karma* and *Saṁsāra* of Hinduism is another instance of his efforts to fuse the two religions by selecting some fundamental concepts from both religions.

KABĪR'S CONCEPT OF MĀYĀ

Kabīr appears to have used the concept of *Māyā*, but not in the same way as Śaṅkara used it. The latter used the concept to delineate the nature of the universe before us. He considers the world from the spiritual point of view as a mere appearance or an illusion and thus not real, in contrast to *Brahman* which is alone real. But since Kabīr accepts the reality of the world around us though he does not recognise in it an eternal value, therefore he asks his followers not to attach themselves closely and affectionately to it. He used the term *Māyā* , which he borrowed from Hinduism in the sense of force of evil which alienates man from God. Kabīr likens *Māyā* to a clever beguiler, full of lascivious charm, an evil woman, a witch, who entangles men with her deceit. It is in this sense that Macauliffe uses the word "mammon" to translate *Māyā*. It is because men are deluded by *Māyā* that they are not released from the toils of *Karma*. Kabīr also speaks of men being deceived by *Kāl*. For example, after ten months you were brought from your mother's womb, and again were beset by *Māyā*. You have cherished hope of life; *Kāl* has choked your breath (*Bijak*, *Śabda* 89).

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37. Cited by Westcott, p. 40; also see *Ādī Granth*, *Gauṛī* 62 in Macauliffe's translation, p. 175.

In Kabīr's verses *Māyā* has an ethical content. Here the symbol of *Māyā* is not the "illusion" expounded by Śaṅkara. According to Kabīr, although this world is a fact yet it is the domain of illusion only in the sense that man should not attach himself to it considering this worldly life as permanent. Therefore, Kabīr persistently speaks of the transitoriness of this world. God alone is permanent. Let us illustrate how Kabīr personifies *Māyā* :

Hail to the woman who hath turned the heads
Of every holy man and penitent high and low;
She is a miser's daughter;
Rejecting God's worshippers she sleepeth with everybody.
At last standing at the saint's door,
She saith, 'I have sought your protection, save me !'
The woman is very beautiful;
Her ornaments tinkle on her feet;
As long as man is alive she attacheth herself to him;
When he dieth she quickly departeth without waiting
for her shoes.
The woman hath conquered the three worlds;
She hath made the eighteen Purāṇas and the places of
pilgrimage love her;
She hath pierced *the hearts* of Brahmā, Vishnu, and Shiva
And infatuated great kings and sovereigns.
There are no bounds to the woman;
She is in collusion with the five evil passions.
Where the vessels of the five evil passions burst,
Saith Kabīr, I was delivered thence by the favour of
the guru (*Ādi Granth, Gaunḍ* 8).

In the following verses Kabīr describes the universal influence of *Māyā* and the means of counteracting it :

The fishes in the water are led by Māyā;
The moths round the lamp are influenced by Māyā;
Through Māyā the elephant feeleth lust;
Creeping things and bumble-bees perish through Māyā —
My brethren, Māyā is so bewitching—
That she illudeth all living beings —
Birds and beasts are imbued with Māyā;
She causeth great hardship to the honey-bees;

Horses and camels are saturated with Māyā;
The eighty-four Siddhas are the sport of Māyā;
The six Jatīs are the slaves of Māyā;
So are the nine Nāths, the sun, and the moon;
Penitents and the supreme Rishis are lulled by Māyā;
In the power of Māyā are Death and his five messengers;
Dogs and jackals are imbued with Māyā;
So are monkeys, leopards, lions;
Cats, sheep, and foxes;
Trees and tubers are subject to Māyā;
The demigods are saturated with Māyā;
So are the ocean, the firmament, and the earth.
Saith Kabir, he who hath a belly *is subject* to Māyā;
But man shall be freed *from her influence* when he
hath found a saint (*Ādi Granth, Bhairo* 13).
Deceitful Māyā hath led captive the whole, or *but*
I have obtained immunity by repeating God's name
(*Ādi Granth, Āsā* 25).

Māyā and Desire are troubles of the world;
But no one thinks so of this.
Māyā and Desire are a troublesome noose;
He who escapes therefrom is a true worshipper.
O Saints, that which comes and goes, is Māyā
(*Bījak, Ramaini* 76).

In the form of a dwarf he did not tempt Bali;
that which tempts is Māyā.
For lack of understanding the whole world is bewildered;
Māyā has deluded the world (*Bījak, Śabda* 8).

God, according to Kabīr, is one, and man can have a relationship of love and affection, and even a union with Him; but man is in the grip of *Karma* and *Saṁsāra* and deluded by Māyā. The religious systems of the Hindus and the Muslims, Kabīr would tell us, with all their external ceremonies and observances are of no use to get out of the grip of these forces. Therefore, Kabīr would teach us to give up all rites and rituals and turn to God surrendering to Him fully with love and a pure heart. This brings us to other points of Kabīr's teachings. They are *bhakti*, *dhikr* purity of heart, guidance of a *guru*, etc.,

which, according to Kabīr, will alone help to achieve salvation, and not the orthodox practices of the Hindus and the Muslims.

KABĪR'S CONCEPT OF BHAKTI

Kabīr is in the line of succession of those religious reformers who advocated *bhakti* or loving devotion to God as the only means of finding God and thus achieving salvation. Therefore, *bhakti* is the foundation on which Kabīr bases his spirituality or piety. In connection with this, he speaks often of repeating (*dhikr*) the name of God (Rāma) which is in the style of the Ṣūfīs and in that of the Rāma-*bhakti*.[38] To Kabīr, however, this was not a mere magic formula. The mere repetition of the name of God would not bring salvation any more than a man can taste sweetness by repeating the word "sugar". The repetition or remembrance of the name of God with Kabīr, seems rather to be a means by which he reminds himself of God's reality and brings to recollection all that the name connotes, and so it helps him to realise his union with God. But the *dhikr* must not be mere lip service; the most fundamental thing that is needed is purity of heart, for God dwells in the heart.

The relation between God and man, according to Kabīr, as to all Hindu and Muslim mystics, is love. In this connection, we find Kabīr, like the Āḷvārs, using the analogy of husband-wife relation, God being the husband to whom the devotee is attached by love, trust and obedience. Kabīr also frequently speaks of "drinking the elixir of Rāma", which is a characteristic Ṣūfī style of expressing the deep satisfaction that is obtained by ecstatic union with God. However, the verses of Kabīr on *bhakti* present a style that is quite new. The style is at once simple, spontaneous and marked by a passion which is common to Hindu and Muslim mysticism, and we might call it Indo-Islamic in character. Let us illustrate some of these verses :

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38. The Ṣūfī practice of the *dhikr* and its Qur'ānic basis have been discussed before. About the existence of *dhikr* (remembrance) in the Rāma-*bhakti*, I was told by my supervisor, Dr. J. G. Arapura, but I could not check it for myself.

Without devotion life is spent to no purpose;
Without worshipping the Lord in the society of
the pious [saints], happiness remains in none.
What is muttering, what austerity, what vows
and worship to him in whose heart there
is another love.
What muttering, what austerity and control
of the passions, what vows and ablutions;
so long as the right, loving worship of the
Lord is not known.[39]

In another place Kabīr considers devotion as the water which has quenched his burning thirst for God :

I have been on fire, and have now found the *name*
of God as water to *extinguish it* :
The *name* of God is the water which hath cooled my
burning body.
Men go to the forest to chasten their hearts,
But without God they cannot find such water
as will do so.
The water of God's *name* hath saved his burning slave
From the fire which hath consumed demigods and men.
In the terrible ocean there is an ocean of happiness;
I continue to drink, but the water is not exhausted.
Saith Kabīr, worship God.
God's *name* is the water which hath extinguished
my thirst (*Ādi Granth, Gauṛi* 1).

According to Kabīr, all are lost without *bhakti* :

The Hindus kill themselves worshipping idols,
the Musalmāns make prostrations;
The former are burned, the latter buried;
but neither sect knoweth anything of *Thee, O God.*
O my soul, the world is stark blind;
On all sides Death's noose is thrown, *but men see it not.*
Poets kill themselves reciting verses;
the Kaparis kill themselves going to Kedarnath;
Jogīs kill themselves wearing matted hair;
but they know nothing of *Thee, O God.*

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39. Cited by Westcott, p. 32.

Kings kill themselves amassing wealth and
burying masses of gold;
Pandits kill themselves reading the Vedas,
and women in gazing on their beauty—
Without the name of God all these are lost;
think and ponder upon this, O man.
Without the name of God who hath obtained salvation ?
Kabīr giveth his admonition (*Ādi Granth, Soraṭha* 1).

Again, Kabīr says that he requires nothing for salvation but only God's name :

It is through insufficient devotion men go to
the heavens of Indra and Shiva and are
born again.[40]
What shall I pray for ? nothing is stable.
Keep God's name in thy heart;
Fame, power, wealth and greatness
Help no one at the last moment (cf. Q. 3.10)
Say who hath derived any happiness
From son, wife, or wealth (cf. Q. 2.48; 3.10).
Saith Kabīr, nothing else availeth me;
The name of God is *sufficient* wealth for
my heart (*Ādi Granth, Dhanāśari* 4).

DHIKR (REMEMBRANCE OF GOD)

Turning to the subject of remembering God, Kabīr says that salvation can be obtained only by remembering God's name (cf. Q. 76.25) and by loving Him :

Remember God, remember God, remember God, my
brethren !
Without remembering God's name the majority of men
shall be lost.

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40. According to Hindu tradition, one who does good deeds may go to heaven, but will be born again and again as soon as the merits of those good acts are exhausted. But immortality is achieved only by acquiring the correct knowledge (*jñāna*) of the Absolute. Therefore, the emphasis in the Upaniṣads is on the *jñāna* or the *Brahma Vidyā*. As against this theory of the Upaniṣads, the mystics, who conceive of a personal God, the stress is on the union with God rather than on going to heaven.

Wife, son, body, house, and wealth confer happiness;
But none of these shall be thine when the time
of death arriveth.
Ajāmīl, the elephant, and the courtesan
committed sinful acts;
Yet they were saved by repeating God's name.
My brethren, you have wandered in the wombs of
pigs and dogs, and yet you are not ashamed.
Why forsake the ambrosia of God's name and eat poison ?
Abandon doubt regarding acts which are prescribed
as well as those which are forbidden,
and take God's name.
The slave Kabīr saith, by the favour of the
guru love God (*Ādī Granth*, *Dhanāśari* 5).

In the following verses Kabīr tells us that he was not an intellectual but was frenzied with divine love by doing *dhikr* (reciting and repeating) of God's name :

I am not skilled in book knowledge,
nor do I understand controversy;
I have grown mad reciting and hearing God's praises.
O Father, I am mad; the whole world is sane;
I am mad;
I am ruined; let not others be ruined *likewise*;
I have not grown mad of mine own will;
God hath made me mad —
The true guru hath dispelled my doubts —
I am ruined, and have lost my intellect:
Let nobody be led astray in doubts like mine,
He who knoweth not himself is mad;
When one knoweth himself he knoweth the one God.[41]
He who is not intoxicated *with divine love* in
this human birth shall never be so.

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41. This saying of Kabīr alludes to a famous Ṣūfī theory, namely, *man 'arafa nafsahu faqad 'arafa rabbahu* (who has known himself, certainly has known his God). This Ṣūfī theory has a corresponding reference to the Upaniṣadic teaching, that is, he who knows himself, knows the Self (cf. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 7.15.1).

Saith Kabīr, I am dyed with the dye of God (i.e.
imbued with God's love) (*Ādi Granth, Bilawalu* 2).
The ambrosial name I repeat with my tongue;
God hath made me His unbought slave (*Ādi Granth, Gauṛi* 40).
Deceitful Māyā hath led captive the whole world,
but I have obtained immunity by repeating
Rāma's name (*Ādi Granth, Āsā* 25).
Repeat the name of Rāma, thou madman!
the ocean of existence is hard to cross (*Bijak, Śabda* 5).

In the following verses Kabīr says remember God and do Him homage:

Remember in thy heart the Being,
By whose remembrance thou shalt obtain
the gate of deliverance,
Go to heaven, and *return not to this* world.
Play the trumpets in the house of the Fearless One.
And the unbeaten strain shall ever fully resound for thee.
Without remembering Him deliverance can never be obtained.
Heartily bow before the Being,
By remembering whom none may refuse thee;
Who conferreth salvation by which great loads
of sin drop off.
And thy transmigration is at an end.
Remember Him through whom thou enjoyest thyself,
And an everburning lamp shall be placed within thee —
The lamp (divine knowledge) which rendereth the
world immortal,
And expelleth the poison of lust and wrath.
Twine and wear on thy neck the rosary
Of Him by remembering whom thy salvation
shall be obtained.
... ...
Remember the Beloved day and night (cf. Q. 76.25),
And thou shalt have no regard for men;
Thou shalt sleep at home in silken bed-clothes,
And thy heart shall be gladdened by a pleasant couch.
Ever remember God in thy heart and sing *His praises*.
By remembering Him thy troubles shall depart,

And Māyā affect thee not.
From the true guru learn how to remember God;
Remember Him every day and night.
Standing or sitting, at every expiration and inspiration,
Waking or sleeping, enjoy the sweets of remembering *Him*,
By remembering God thou shalt be united with Him.
Make the remembrance of God's name thy support;
By remembering Him no weight of sin shall oppress thee.
Neither wrought nor spoken incantations can prevail
with Him,
Saith Kabīr, who hath no limit (*Ādi Granth, Rāmkali* 9).

Kabīr's sayings on the remembrance of God are very much like those found in the Qur'ān and in Ṣūfī literature. In the Qur'ān the *dhikr* of God has been emphasised so much that we are asked to remember God in the morning and in the evening, day and night, standing and sitting, and even at every moment. And in the Ṣūfī theology, the practice of *dhikr* is emphasised with equal weight along with other primary obligations. In their language it is said : *dhikr Allāh har dam* (remember God every moment).

KABĪR'S CONCEPT OF THE PURITY OF HEART

According to Kabīr, the mere remembrance and repetition of God's name will lead to nothing. What is needed is the purity of heart. Thus he says :

God cannot be obtained *even* by *offering* one's weight in gold;
But I have purchased Him with my soul [heart];
And now that I recognise Him as mine own,
My mind is naturally at ease. (*Ādi Granth, Gauṛi* 19)

Unless you remove evil from your hearts, how shall you find
God by dwelling in the forest ?
They who deem their own homes equal to the forest are
perfect *among* men.
You shall obtain true happiness,
If you lovingly repeat *the name* of the Life *of the world*
What avail *wearing* matted hair, smearing yourself with ashes,
and dwelling in caves ?

He who hath conquered his own heart hath conquered the world, because he is free from the deadly sins.

... ...

... ...

Saith Kabīr, I now know *God*; the guru hath explained divine knowledge *to me*;

I have met God who dwelleth in the heart; my mind shall now no more wander (*Ādi Granth*, *Marū* 2).

Kabīr says contemptuously that ceremonies, austerities, fasting and worship of stones, and love for worldly things do not help in obtaining God; but only devotion with a pure and upright heart God is achieved :

What availeth devotion, what penance, what fasting and worship

To him in whose heart there is worldly love ?

O man, apply thy heart to God ;

Thou shalt not obtain Him by artifice.

Put away covetousness and the example of others;

Lay aside lust, wrath, and pride.

By the religious practices of *the superstitious* boasting is increased;

They join together and worship a stone.

Saith Kabīr, by devotion I have obtained *the Lord*;

By becoming simple *in heart* I have met God

(*Ādi Granth*, *Gauṛi* 6).

Then Kabīr says that without purification of the heart pilgrimages are of no avail:

The heart is not satisfied with pilgrimages to the banks of *sacred streams*;

Man remaineth entangled with good and bad acts

(*Ādi Granth*, *Gauṛi* 9).

In another place Kabīr says that death triumphs over all except God's sincere worshippers:

This world is like a show; none may remain here;

Proceed the straight way, otherwise thou shalt be severely buffeted.

Children, the old, and the young, O my brethren, shall all be taken away by Death.

God hath made poor man like a mouse; Death like
a cat eateth him up;
He payeth no regard to rich or poor:
He destroyeth kings equally with their subjects —
so mighty is Death !
They who please God *become* His worshippers, and
theirs is a special case;
They neither come nor go (not subject to *saṁsāra*) ;
they never die; God is with them.
Know in your hearts that by forsaking
son, wife, wealth, and property *which are perishable,*
Saith Kabīr, you shall meet the Lord; hear this,
O ye saints ! (*Ādi Granth, Bilawalu* 1)

KABĪR'S LOVE RELATION WITH GOD

Kabīr's love poems are very fine indeed. In connection with this, he uses the analogy of husband-wife relations bound by the cord of love. Let us illustrate some of Kabīr's mystical love songs recorded in the *Bijak*. Speaking of the nature of love which is his common theme, and about the sacrifice that the Beloved wants, Kabīr says :

This is love's abode, not the home of a dear aunt.
He who severs his head and places it on the ground,
is admitted.
He who severs the head, places it on the ground
then tramples it under foot,
Says Kabīr, if such a one be thou, enter thou.
Love grows not in the garden, nor is in the
market sold :
Whoever likes it, king or subject, let him
purchase with his head.
I have drunk the brimful cup of love, the guru
with knowledge hath imbued me.
Of the Word I have sounded the trumpet :
the warrior stands in the field.
One moment that overpowers and at another
that passes away is not love.

The unwithering love that dwells at all time
that is love,
The love that made its appearance, where has it gone?
Everyone had seen it.
Weeping at one moment, laughing at the next,
could that be love.
Love, Love, everyone utters, but love, none truly knows.
That which absorbs thee at all the moments,
that is love.
So long as I-ness existed, the Guru could not enter :
with the parting of I-ness, the Guru stepped in.
For, the lane of love is very narrow,
two it cannot contain,
The heart wherein love flows not, deem thou
the burning-ghāṭ.
Or deem this body the blacksmith's bellows
which heave though life they contain not.
If I heard love in exchange for the head
in market being sold,
I shall lose no time in entering the bargain and
instantly sever my head, and offer it.
Without love there is no peace, without pain
of separation there is no renunciation.
Without the Guru, the blemishes of the soul [heart]
and the mind cannot be wiped out.
Let thy love be like the Chakor's love for the moon.
Even if the severed head falls to the ground,
the gaze still is fixed in the moon.
Great is the love of the fish for water,
aught else falls short of it.
As soon as it is separated from water life departs.
Dost thou want to taste the draughts of love,
and yet maintain pride ?
Know the impossibility — two swords in one sheath
have never been seen nor heard.
Kabīr has clasped to his heart the cup of love,
It has permeated every pore of his body, what
need for addition is left ?
Kabīr ! Round the oven of love, many a one took his seat.

They proffered their head, drank, whilst others
left without getting drink.
I tried many medicines but none was efficacious
like love.
Love starts in one part of the body, and the
whole is transmuted to gold.[42]

In another place Kabīr says :

All are wives of Rāma : unmovable Purusha
is the Husband (*Bijak*, *Ramaini* 27).
Man's love is toward woman and woman's love
toward man.
But they who love the Purusha alone are
few in all the world (*Bijak*, *Ramaini* 50),
Through blindness none has rest : not one considers;
Not knowing the bhakti of Hari, the whole world
is drowned and dead (*Bijak*, *Ramainī* 65).

Still in another place Kabīr says that his whole body was burning with God's love : it is useless to try to heal any particular part of it :

There is no *special* part of *my body* to which
I may apply *healing* ointment
I have examined my body but found no such place.
He who feeleth pain knoweth it;
The service of God is a barbed arrow;
I consider all women to be alike;
Who knoweth which shall be dear to the Bridegroom?
Saith Kabīr, the Husband, forsaking all other *women*,
Shall meet her on whose forehead *such* lot *hath been*
written (*Ādi-Granth*, *Gauṛi* 21).

KABĪR'S CONCEPT OF PRAPATTI : ASLĀMĀ (SUBMISSION TO GOD)

However, Kabīr says that *bhakti*, purity of heart, *dhikr* and love alone cannot help us in obtaining God's grace. We, rather, have to surrender ourselves completely to the mercy of God who takes care of us. This doctrine of *prapatti* or absolute surrender

42. Quoted by Munshi, K. M., *Ṣūfīs, Mystics and Yogis of India*,....

to God is a common phenomenon of Hindu and Muslim mysticism. But it received a special emphasis with the Vaiṣṇava *bhaktas* after Rāmānuja. On the question whether or not *prapatti* is the only means of *bhakti* religion or one of the means, the disciples of Rāmānuja split up into two schools. The southern school accepted the first alternative, which Kabīr has also accepted. This doctrine has reference both in the *Gitā* (18.56-58, 65-69) and in the Qur'ān (5.119; 9.119; and also cf. 8.17). The Ṣūfīs took special interest in these verses of the Qur'ān and interpreted them as evidence for man's obligation to surrender to a loving God who takes the first step towards man, the elect of His creation, to draw him unto Him by the powerful cords of love. So, in the very mood of the Ṣūfīs, and the teaching of the *Gitā*, Kabīr places himself altogether in God's power :

Thy commands are acceptable to men;
I consider not their propriety.
Thou art the river, Thou art the pilot,
from Thee is salvation.
O man, embrace the service *of God*,
Whether He be angry with thee or love thee.
Thy name, of God, is my support, as a woman
rejoiceth on *beholding* her son.
Saith Kabīr, I am the slave of Thy house,
preserve me or destroy me (*Ādi Granth*, *Gauṛī* 69).
The poor soul of man is tied to this world
with many knots.
It cannot unloose itself without the help of God.[43]
As many as are making efforts, they are drowned;
the ocean is not crossed by them.
Though they be performing works, and many abstinences,
their mind is burnt by egotism.[44]

In the following verses, Kabīr says that man should rely on God and practise humility :

Without God what succour hath man?
The love of parents, brethren, sons, and wife is all
fleeting.

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43. Cited by Westcott, p. 32.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

Construct a raft for the other world;
what reliance can be placed on wealth ?
What confidence can be reposed in this vessel,
if it be chinked in the slightest ?
Thou shalt obtain the fruit of all religion and
good works if thou desire to become the dust
of everybody's feet (*Ādi Granth, Sārang* 3).

KABĪR'S CONCEPT OF KARMA AND QADR (FATE)

In these verses we have clear evidence that Kabīr believed in *Qadr* as in *Karma*. In accordance with the idea that man must surrender to God's grace, Kabīr, like the Ṣūfīs, tells us that man does not have power to do anything. All power belongs to God. The verse of the Qur'ān which describes the battle of Badr says that it was not Muḥammad who did everything for the victory, but it was God : "So it was not ye who slew them (enemies), but God slew them; thou didst not cast when thou didst cast, but God cast" (8.17). Commenting on this verse, A.J. Arberry says :

> These words constantly meditated seemed to the Ṣūfī conclusive evidence that God even acts through the instrumentality of man when He finds man worthy to become His instrument. Just as the miracle of the grovelstones and dust scattered by God into the eyes of the Meccans at Badr decisively influenced the issue in the struggle between faith and unbelief, so at all times God is able and ready to work wonders, in the persons of His saints, to prove the realities of His religion.[45]

Man is only the instrument through which God does His work. This is the idea we have also in the case of the battle of Kurukṣetra where in fact Kṛṣṇa did everything through the instrumentality of Arjuna, or the Pāṇḍava brothers, for the sake of *Dharma* against evil. Kabīr, drawing inspiration from two religions, believed in both the doctrines of *Karma*[46] as well as

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45. *Ṣūfism*, London, 1956, p. 22.

46. The doctrine of *Karma* is often misinterpreted. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, the interpretation of *Karma* as implying a denial of human freedom which is generally regarded as the basis of all ethical values, is not

Qadr. His faith in fate is further expressed in the following verses :

Whatever I did, you did; I did nothing myself;
Should man say, I did it, it was in your strength
that it was done.
Everything is from God and nothing from His servant;
He can change a mustard seed into a mountain and
a mountain into a mustard seed.
In blessings, O God, thou surpassest all,
in Thy dealings with men Thou art without
a rival;
God is chief of all kings, . . .[47]
Whatever occurreth is according to Thy will, *O God*;
He who understandeth this shall be easily absorbed
in Thee (*Ādi Granth*, *Prabhāti* 1).

In conformity with the same idea of helplessness on the part of man, and God being the All-powerful helper, Kabīr teaches us not to be too anxious in taking care of ourselves. God takes care of all His creatures. This attitude of trust in God is an important doctrine of *taṣawwuf* called *Tawakkul 'ala Allāh*, which has been enjoined by the Qur'ān, and God loves the *mutawakkilun* (those who trust God and are dependent on Him) (cf. Q. 3. 153).[48] Hence Kabīr says:

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correct. But when rightly viewed the law of *Karma* does not conflict with the reality of freedom. According to this learned author, *Karma* is the principle of science which displaces belief in magic or the theory that we can manipulate the forces of the world at our pleasure. The course of nature is determined by the operation of immutable laws.

The theory of *Karma* recognises the rule of law not only in outward nature, butalso in the world of mind and morals. "Ṛta manifests itself equally in nature and in human society." "At a time", contends Radhakrishnan, "when people were doing devil's work under divine sanction and consoling themselves by attributing everything to God's will, the principle of *Karma* insisted on the primacy of the ethical and identified God with the rule of law." "Karma is not a mechanical principle but a spiritual necessity. It is the embodiment of the mind and will of God." HVL, 72-73. In other words, in the final analysis, according to Radhakrishnan's interpretation, *Karma* seems to be identical with *Qadr*.

47. Cited by Westcott, pp. 64-65.
48. Also cf. R. A. Nicholson, "Tawakkul", EI, IV, 703

Feel no care; be free from care; the giver is powerful; the beasts of the field, the birds and the insects have neither wealth nor store house.
The tortoise takes care of its egg;
without breasts it supplies its needs;
so God provides for all and makes provision
for the three Lokas (i.e. earth, heaven and hell).[49]

KABĪR'S CONCEPT OF GURU-PĪR

However, bhakti, love, *dhikr*, purity of heart and *prapatti* are not enough by themselves. In order that man may be able to find God and enjoy a spiritual union with Him, Kabīr advocates that man needs a path-finder or a spiritual preceptor (*guru*, *pir*). This was another idea he took over from Ṣūfīsm and Hindu mysticism. In Islamic tradition thereis no scriptural support for showing reverence to a *pir*. But the Ṣūfīs, apparently having adopted it from Hindus,[50] gave so much importance to it that they even surpassed the originator of the tradition. During the medieval period in both Ṣūfīsm and Hindu mysticism the status of a spiritual preceptor was raised to that of divinity. Many preceptors were deified and worshipped. Kabīr, however, was different from all of them. Sometimes in his verses, he uses the word *guru* to mean God whom he also calls the *Sat Guru* (True Teacher). God is the Great Teacher to whom Kabīr would resort for guidance. Still he also believes that the instruction of an earthly *guru* is valuable, one who himself has experienced enlightenment and union with God, and one who is willing to pass on to others the blessings he has himself received. But Kabīr cautions that great care must be taken in choosing a *guru*, so that a pretender-teacher may be avoided. But when a true or right *guru* is found he must be treated with reverence. Kabīr says many laudatory things of this kind of *guru* as he warns against the false *guru*. In his estimation, the true *guru* is one whose love is fixed on God, who recognises his own worthlessness apart from God, who lives for others. For such a one death has lost its terror. He is the true guide and walks in the path of God. Thus Kabīr says :

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49. Quoted by Westcott, p. 64.
50. Cf. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.14.2; *Mahābhārata*, *Śānti Parvan*, 108.17.

Strain your water before you drink it;
test your guru before you commit yourself to him.
When the guru is covetous, his disciple will
be grasping; both employ trickery; both
will be drowned in their folly, having
boarded the ship of stone.[51]
The *chelā* (disciple) whose guru is blind, while he
himself is more blind; the blind one gives
a push to his blind fellow, they both fall
into the well (*Bījak*, *Sākhī* 155).
Regard your guru as a knife grinder, let him
grind your heart; cleansing the heart from
all impurity, let him make it bright as a mirror.[52]
He who has chosen a bodily guru (*guru* in pretension)
and has failed to recognize the true guru;
time after time he rises and sinks, ensnared
in the ocean of existence.
That day is blessed which causes you to meet a
holy man; as you embrace him fervently, sin
is driven from the body.
Through association with Sādhu comes remembrance
of God; that hour is recorded to a man's credit
in his account with God; all the rest is
valueless as air.
The Sādhu is the river, love is the water;
in that place wash your body;
Kabīr says, 'be clean in company with the Sādhus.'[53]
That death which terrifieth the whole world,
The guru's instruction hath set before me in
a clear light (*Ādi Granth*, *Gauṛī* 20).
Thou (God) art the True Guru;
I am Thy novice (*Ādi Granth*, *Gauṛī* 2).
I worship the True Guru, and ever and ever
propitiate Him;

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51. Cited by Westcott, p. 54.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

For such service I shall obtain happiness
in His Court (*Ādi Granth, Bhairo* 6).
By the favour of the guru thou shalt obtain
the wealth of God (*Ādi Granth, Āsā* 15).

In the following verses Kabīr speaks about the absolute necessity of a *guru* :

Can a man without feet ever leap ?
Can a man without a mouth burst into laughter ?
Without sleep can man repose ?
Can one churn milk without a churn ?
Can a cow without an udder give milk ?
Can one accomplish a long journey without a road ?
So the way cannot be found without a true guru,
Kabīr saith, and admonisheth *all men* (*Ādi Granth, Basant* 3).
As water will not remain without a vessel,
So without a religious guide man shall go to hell.
Burn him who thinketh not on God,
But whose mind is ever absorbed in the field of his body.
As without a ploughman land cannot be tilled,
As without a thread jewels cannot be strung,
And as without a loop clothes cannot be fastened,
So without a holy guide man shall go to hell.
As a child cannot be born without a father and mother,
As clothes cannot be washed without water,
As one cannot ride without an equipage,
As without music there cannot be dancing,
So without a guru *man cannot reach God's* court.
As the bad woman leaving her husband looketh for
another, *thus eager should man be to* obtain a *guru*.
Saith Kabīr, do one thing—
Become holy and thou shalt not die again
(*Ādi Granth, Gaund* 9).

There are innumerable verses and couplets in which Kabīr has expressed himself on the necessity of guidance by a preceptor. It is not necessary to quote all of them. The important point to note in this connection is that though his conception of *guru* and *pir* and the efficacy of their teaching for spiritual progress are in line with those of Hindu and Muslim mystics, still he would not raise the position of a preceptor to divine

rank. But his disciples, after his death, deified him and worshipped him as an incarnation of God.

Having described all the essentials of his teaching, Kabīr tells us that salvation can only be obtained by true *bhakti*, *dhikr*, pure heart and word of *guru* :

However great man's exertions, without God's name,
he shall be drowned in the terrible ocean and not cross over.
Thou hast practised thy religious duties and great austerities,
yet pride consumeth thy soul.
Why hast thou forgotten the Lord who is the
giver of life and food ?
Human birth is a priceless diamond or ruby;
thou hast lost it for a *kauri*,[54]
Not having thought of God in thy heart,
thou sufferest from the thirst of
covetousness and the hunger of error;
The intoxication of pride deceiveth those who
keep not the word of the guru in their hearts.
Sinful are they who are led away by pleasure,
who are tempted by sensual delights, and who
enjoy the savour of wine.
They who by destiny keep the company of the saints,
float over like iron attached to timber.
Through error I have wandered among human and lower
births; I am now weary and overspent with travail.
Saith Kabīr, on meeting the guru *I have felt* great joy,
and my love and devotion have saved me

(*Ādi Granth*, *Gauṛi* 56).

Again:

O my soul, repeat God's name
As did Dhru and Prahlād *of old*.
O Thou compassionate to the poor,
my reliance is on Thee.
I have *therefore* embarked all my family on the guru's raft.

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54. *Kaurī* is a small shell. Now a days it is used for playing a game named after it. But it is said that once upon a time it was used as coin of very little value. I am not sure, if there is any history behind it.

If it please God He will have His order obeyed,
And cause this raft to float over.
By the favour of the guru such knowledge hath filled me
That all my transmigration is at an end.
Saith Kabīr, worship God;
In this world and the next, everywhere, it is
He alone who knoweth (*Ādi Granth, Gauṛi* 61).
Ask not a Sādhu about his caste, but about his
knowledge of God;
When you are determining the price of a sword,
there is no need to consider the sheath.[55]

KABĪR'S SENSE OF HUMILITY

Another aspect of Kabīr's essential teaching is his great sense of humility. In that, he considers himself as the humblest of all, a great sinner and worthless. He urges people to ponder on their sin or guilt and not to attach themselves to the world which is impermanent and transitory. "Kabīr's conceptions of sin and death", remarks Macauliffe, "agree with the general conception of them with a special hint to Islāmic idea of sin and emphasis on the transitoriness of the world."[56] The famous verse of the Qur'ān which says: "Everything upon the earth passeth away, save His face (55.26)", taken by the Ṣūfīs as the basis on which to found their characteristic doctrine of passing away (*fanā*) of human attributes through union with God. This verse of the Qur'ān is responsible for making the Ṣūfīs think of the transtoriness of the world which they otherwise consider a dread reality. The world, according to the Ṣūfīs, is a place where an opportunity for service to God is available.

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55. Cited by Westcott, p. 63. This verse tells us clearly that saints, Hindu or Muslim, are above and beyond the distinctions of caste or nationality. They belong to no particular religion; they are the devotees of God and thus free citizens of God's world. The verse also makes it clear that a man is to benefit from the company and guidance of a saint, who has experienced God's knowledge. It is useless to try to know whether he is a Hindu or a Muslim. This being his attitude, Kabir must have benefited from the association of both Hindu and Muslim saints.

56. *Op. cit.*, p. 176.

But before the mighty Death lays its icy hand on us, we must avail ourselves every moment of our life to serve God. An analogy of all these Ṣūfīstic ideas is found in the verses of Kabīr quoted below:

A sinner from my birth, in sin from head to foot I lie;
O generous giver, comforter, but listen to my cry.[57]
I am the worst of all, every one is good except me;
who considers himself in this light, he is my friend.[58]
How shall I cross the sea, O Master?
How shall I cross the sea? I am full of my sins.
How shall I serve and worship Thee, how meditate on Thee?
only without am I white, just like a heron.
My nature is a snake's, and I am a great sinner
The conscience is foul, and like a cat.
I see it to be contrary and crazed, wrapt in
the cloak of the six Darśanas.
Kabīr says, Listen, O men that are mine:
all are caught in the noose of scheming witch
(*Bījak, Śabda* 104).
Though man leave his home for the forest region
and gather tubers to live on,
His sinful and evil mind even then abandoneth not
misdeeds.
How shall I be saved? how cross over the great terrible
ocean?
Preserve me, preserve me, O God; I Thy slave *have*....Thine....
The desire to gratify my evil passions forsaketh me not;
Though I make many efforts to guard myself against them,
I am entangled in them again and again.
My life hath passed—youth and old age—
no good have I done;
This priceless human life attached itself
to a kauri and become like it.
Saith Kabīr, O my God, Thou art contained in everything;
There is none so merciful as Thou,
none so sinful as I (*Ādi Granth, Bilāwal* 3).

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57. Cited by Westcott, p. 52.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

O my soul, thou hast no *helper*; drag not the weight
of *others' sins* behind thee (*Ādi Granth, Gauṛī* 64).

In the following verses Kabīr says that when the deadly sins are subdued man arrives at the knowledge of the one God and obtains salvation:

When the wick of *pride* is dry and the *oil*
of worldly love is spent;
When the drum of *boasting* is not heard,
and the mind is fast asleep,
... ...
... ...
When the strings are broken,
the rebeck no longer playeth,—
Man hath ruined his affairs by error —
When man obtaineth understanding he shall forget
Preaching, ranting, arguing, and intoning.
Saith Kabīr, the highest dignity shall not be far
from those
Who crush their deadly sins (*Ādī-Granth, Āsā* 11).

KABIR'S CONCEPT OF THE TRANSITORY NATURE OF THE WORLD

Kabīr was a weaver. Sometimes he expresses his idea of the world and our existence in it bound by law of *Karma* in the language of a weaver:

As a bird percheth on a tree,
such is the world (transitory).
I have drunk the elixir of God
By which other elixirs are forgotten.
Since we are not permanent ourselves,
Why should we mourn the death of others?
Whatever is born perisheth;
why should we be sorry and weep for that?
When man becometh attached to holy man,
he drinketh *God's elixir*, and is devoted
to Him from whom he hath sprung.
Saith Kabīr, I have thought of God in my heart;
resigning the world remember Him (*Ādi Granth, Gauri* 64).
No one know the mystery of that weaver

Who came into the world and spread the warp.
The earth and the sky are the two beams,
The sun and moon are two filled shuttles,
Taking a thousand threads he spreads them lengthways;
Today he weaveth still, but hard to reach is the
far off end (*Bijak*, *Ramaiṇi* 28).

It seems that by threads Kabīr alludes to the threads of *Karma*, and the fabric into which they are woven appears to be the human body which is the sum total of consciousness and unconsciousness. This is one instance how Kabīr used ideas borrowed from Hinduism. Again in the very mood of the Ṣūfīs, Kabīr says:

What thou seest that is passing away:
Whom thou dost not see, on him continue to reflect.
When in the tenth gate the key (knowledge) is given:
then the sight of the Merciful one is obtained.[59]
As the stars at dawn pass away, so the world
passes away; these two letters (Rāma) do not
pass away; them Kabīr has seized.[60]
Worldly life is like a dream,
But, believing the world to be real, I attached
myself to it, and abandoned the Supreme Treasure
O father, I made love to the *courtesan* mammon,
And she stole from me the jewel of divine knowledge.
With its eyes open the moth becometh entangled;
the insect regardeth not the flame;
So, stupid *man* attached to gold and women heedeth
Not Death's noose.
Reflect, abandon sin; and God will save thee.
Saith Kabīr, such is the Life of the world;
He hath no equal (*Ādi Granth*, *Āsā* 27).

In another place Kabīr describes in a beautiful song the perishable nature of the world, and of our body which is made of clay (cf. Q. 7.12; 15.26-27,33). Thus he remonstrates with those who think that the human body is something to be embellished and preserved:

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59. *Ibid.*, p. 36.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

Man in this world is wholly sinful from his very birth, and there are many ready to claim his body. The parents say, 'He is our child and we have nourished him for our own benefit.' The wife says,'He is my husband,' and like a tigress wishes to seize him. The children gaze at him, and like the god of death, keep their mouths wide open for support. The vulture and the crow look forward to his death. The pigs and the dogs wait on the road for his bier to pass on its way to the burning ghāt. The fire says, 'I shall not leave him, until he is utterly consumed.' The earth says, 'I shall obtain him.' The winds think of carrying him off. O ignorant people, you speak of this body as your house; do you not see that a hundred enemies hang about your throat? Beguiled by the illusion of this world, you regard such a body as your own. So many desire a share in your body that you will live in trouble all your life. O madmen, you do not wake up to a knowledge of this, but repeatedly say, 'it is mine, it is mine.'[61]

As we can see, in these verses Kabīr's view of the transitory nature of the world and human body is verily Hindu or Muslim.

KABĪR'S CONCEPT OF DEATH

According to Ṣūfī tradition, the fact of death should be remembered as frequently as possible (*udhkuru al-mawta kathiran*), for rememberance of death, which may happen any moment, leads one to work for the next world more and more. In the verses of Kabīr on death the same idea is found clearly. In the following verses Kabīr says that all must die at last; God's name is their only support:

Jogīs, celibates, penitents, anchorets,
they who wander on many pilgrimages,
They who pluck out and shave their hair,
they who practise silence, and they who
wear matted locks, must all die at last;
Wherefore worship God.

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61. *Ibid.*, p. 30; also see *Ādī Granth, Gauṛī* 11, 16; *Soraṭha* 2; *Mārū* 7.

What can the Jamna (Jumna) do for those whose
tongues love God's name?
They who know the Shastars (*Śāstras*), the Veds (Vedas),
astrology, and various languages,
Who know written and spoken incantations,
and all medical science, must die at last.
They who enjoy empires, umbrellas, thrones,
many beautiful women,
Betel, camphor, and highly fragrant sandal,
must die at last.
The Veds, Purāṇas, and Simiritis (*Smṛtis*) I have
all searched, but there is no salvation
anywhere *in them*.
Saith Kabīr, so repeat God's name that transmigration
may be at an end (*Ādi Granth*, *Āsā* 5).

In the following verses Kabīr says that none may escape physical death, but it brings salvation to the holy men:

Man hearing all the instructions of the Veds
and the Purāṇs (*Purāṇas*), desireth to perform
religious ceremonies *to overcome death*.
Death hath seized all people, *even* the wise;
the pandits *too* depart without hope.
O man, thou hast not succeeded in thy sole subject
Since thou hast not worshipped the supreme God.
Men have gone to the forests, practised jog,
performed austerities, and lived on the tubers
and roots they picked up.
The Nādīs,[62] the readers of the Veds,
the Ekshabdīs, and the Monīs are all
enrolled in Death's register.
Loving service entereth not into *man's* heart ;
he pampereth his body and giveth it *to Death* ;
He hypocritically *singeth* hymns, but what can
he obtain from God ?
Death hath fallen on the whole world ;
in his *register* the sceptical theologian is recorded.

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62. "Nādī" literally means "the caller", here it refers to those Jogīs, who go about playing a small pipe.

Saith Kabīr, they who know *God's* love and
devotion to God are pure (*Ādi Granth*, *Soraṭha* 3).
What thou art doing tomorrow, do now ;
What thou art doing now, do it at once :
afterwards nothing will be done, when
death comes on thy head.[63]
Death of which the world is afraid, is joy to my mind ;
by death the full perfect joy is obtained.[64]

In the above verses, Kabīr seems to have used death in the sense of bodily death, that is, the end of his *sāṁsāric* life and the beginning of living for ever in union with God. In another verse the idea has been made further clear :

On the day on which I died, on that day joy
sprangup. The Lord met with me, Govind
honours his own companion.[65]

KABĪR'S MORAL AND ETHICAL TEACHING

As a corollary to his sense of humility, and his consciousness of the impermanence of the world and everything in it, Kabīr teaches us to give up pride, ego, covetousness, anger, etc. Kabīr's moral and ethical teaching can be compared with those of the Buddha, or for that matter with that of any great mystic of the world. His verses teaching morality are simple but extremely penetrating and appealing. Thus he says :

What is the use of greatness ?
the palm is a tall tree, but none
sits under its shade and its fruit
is out of reach.[66]
The tree bears not fruit for itself,
nor for itself does the stream collect
its waters; for the benefit of others
alone does the sage assume a bodily shape.[67]
The pride of intellect is manifold,
now a swindler, now a thief ; now a liar,

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63. Cited by Westcott, p. 33; also see p. 57.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
67. *Ibid.*, p. 47; also see p. 59.

now a murderer; men, sages and gods have
run after it in vain; its mansion has a
hundred gates.
In pride there is adversity, in sin there is
suffering; in kindness there is stability,
and in forgiveness there is God.
The righteous man does not give up his piety,
though he meets with crores of wicked persons :
even as the sandal tree is not deprived of
its cooling properties though venomous
snakes twine round it.
The black snake is in the heart.
It has deposited venom in the souls of all;
the few who sincerely worship the true God,
will be saved. [68]
To be truthful is best of all, if the heart be
truthful. A man may speak as much as he likes ;
but there is no pleasure apart from truthfulness.
He who has no check upon his tongue,
no truth is in his heart :
with such a one keep not company.
He will kill you on the highway.[69]
You call yourselves pandits, virtuous, brave,
generous, and assert that you alone are great;
It is only when *this pride of yours* is forgotten
that you shall be absorbed in Him from whom
you sprang.
Only he understandeth whom Thou, O God,
causest to understand (cf. Q. 2.272) ;
how can man obtain permanence without
understanding (*Ādi Granth*, *Gauṛī* 51).
Rāwan had to leave the golden fortress and
strongholds which he had made —
O man, why actest thou as it pleaseth thyself ?
When Death cometh and catcheth thee by the hair,
only God's name will save thee.

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68. *Ibid.*, pp. 32, 33, 34.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

Death and life are the work of God;
this deceitful world is only an entanglement;
Saith Kabīr, they who have the elixir of God
in their hearts shall ultimately be saved
(*Ādi Granth*, *Māru* 6).

Thou who art saturated with lust, wrath,
and covetousness, knowest not the way of the One God.
Thine eyes are burst, thou seest nothing,
thou art drowned *even* without water.
Why walkest thou so foppishly ?
Thou art a compound of bones, skin, and filth,
and saturated with evil odour.
Thou repeatest not God's name;
in what doubts hast thou gone astray ?
Death is not far from thee.
Whatever efforts thou makest to preserve thy body,
shall it last when *thy term of* life is complete ?
Nothing resulteth from thine efforts;
what can any mortal do ?
If it be God's will, man shall meet a true guru
and repeat the One name.
Thou livest in a house of sand and puffest out
thy body, O simpleton.
Saith Kabīr, they, however clever, who
remember not God are lost (*Ādi-Granth*, *Kedārā* 4).

In another place Kabīr says in an eloquent language how he subdued his evil passions by waging a war. At the end of the war, which he won, he obtaineds alvation :

How shall I subdue this beautiful fortress (body),
my brother,
Which hath double walls (doubts and wrong-headedness)
and triple moats (three *guṇas*),
Whose entrenchments are the five *subtle elements*,
the twenty five categories (Sāṅkhya conception of
body), worldly love, pride, jealousy, and
very powerful Māyā ?
I who am poor cannot obtain strength to
take that fortress; what shall I do O God ?

Lust is its folding doors, woe and weal its
gate-keepers, demerits and merits its gates;
Anger, which is very quarrelsome, its commander;
and the heart its rebel king.
The *defenders* had dainties for their coats of mail,
egoism for their helmets, and evil understanding
for their bows they draw;
Covetousness, which dwelleth in the *quiver* of the
heart, became their arrows; thus the fortress
was impregnable;
But I made divine love the fuse, meditation the
howitzer, and divine knowledge the shells;
I gently lit the fuse with the fire of God's *name*,
and captured *the fortress* with one shot.
I began to fight assisted by truth and contentment,
and battered both its doors;
By the favour of the congregation of the saints
and of the guru I made its king a prisoner.
By dint of remembering God I, a coward, have
cut the noose of Death.
The slave Kabīr hath scaled the fortress, and secured
an imperishable empire (*Ādi Granth*, *Bhairo* 17).

KABĪR'S CONCEPT OF THE FINAL GOAL

From these verses we get the clear idea that Kabīr, like other Hindu and Muslim mystics, recogises the final goal of the soul ; the union with God for which he was striving. That union being his ultimate goal, he has no desire for heaven or hell, but only for God's love. Thus he says :

For those who know Him not, are heaven and hell;
They who know Hari have no part in them
I take no thought for sin or virtue;
neither to heaven nor hell go I (*Bijak*, *Śabda* 42).
The men who have no *correct notion* of the Supreme Being,
Think of entering heaven by mere words,
I know not where heaven is;
Everybody saith he longeth to go there,
But there is no satisfaction in *such* conversation—

The heart is *only* satisfied when pride departeth.
As long as man desireth to go to heaven,
So long *shall he find* no dwelling at
God's feet (*Ādi Granth*, *Gauṛi* 10).
Long not for a dwelling in heaven,
and fear not to dwell in hell;
What will be, will be; O my soul, hope not at all.
Sing the praises of God from whom the
supreme reward is obtained (*Ādi Granth*, *Gauṛi* 63).
Everybody saith he is going thither ;
I know not where heaven is.
They who know not the secrets of their own hearts
Glibly talk of heaven.
As long as man desireth heaven,
He shall not dwell at God's feet.
I know not where heaven's gate is,
Nor its moat, nor its plastered fortress.
Saith Kabīr, what *more* can I now say
Than that the society of saints is heaven ?
(*Ādi Granth*, *Bhairo* 16).

How does one obtain salvation or union with God ? We have seen so far that Kabīr has told us all the means of achieving a spiritual communion with God. Kabīr also uses merchants' terminology sometimes in expressing spiritual matters. For example,

Some deal in bronze and copper,
others in cloves and betel-nut;
The saints deal in God's name;
that is my merchandise.
O dealers in the name of God,
The priceless diamond hath come to hand
and worldly thoughts have fled.
They whom the True One attached to truth,
remain attached to it; truth is their occupation.
They dispatched a load of the true thing,
and it reached *God*, the storekeeper.
God is Himself the gem, the jewel, and the
precious stone; He is Himself the jeweller;
He is in every direction.....; (cf. Q. 2.115).

He setteth *everything* in motion;
He is a permanent dealer.
O man, make thy heart the ox, meditation the road,
fill thy sack with divine knowledge,
and load it *on the ox* :
Saith Kabīr, hear O saints, my goods have arrived
at their destination (*Ādi-Granth*, *Kedāra* 11).

These verses are regarded as the finest allegory by which Kabīr has described his idea about reaching God. In the final lines, he has told us definitely that his efforts have borne him fruit, that is, he has achieved a union with God, Kabīr describes his experience of God and union with Him in many beautiful verses. His concept of union with God is analogous to what we have seen in the cases of Manṣūr Hallāj, Bayzīd Bistāmī and other Ṣūfīs who were persecuted and executed by the state authorities for uttering such blasphemous words.

In the following verses Kabīr expresses his longing to meet his Beloved God, and he uses the analogy of a woman who longs to meet her husband-lord :

Woman with her eyes filled *with tears* and heaving
awaiteth *her lord*;
Her heart is not happy; she retraceth not her
steps in the hope of seeing him.
Why fliest thou not away, O black raven, [70]
so that I may quickly meet my beloved ?
Saith Kabīr, perform God's service to obtain
the dignity of eternal life;
The name of God is the one support ;
repeat it with thy tongue (*Ādi Granth*, *Gauṛī* 65).
Then Kabīr tells us how he found God :
God cannot be obtained *even* by *offering* one's
weight in gold;
But I have purchased Him with my soul;

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70. According to a superstitious belief, if a raven come to a woman's casement when her husband is absent, she says : "Fly away, O raven." If it fly away in obedience to her order, it is an omen that her husband will soon return. Here in Kabir's verse the word "raven" is understood to mean man's evil passions.

... ...

Brāhma [*sic*], however much he talketh,
hath not found God's limit;
But by my devotion God came to me as I sat at home.
Saith Kabīr, I have cast off my wavering disposition ;
It is only in God's service I am now a
sleeping partner (*Ādi Granth, Gauṛi* 19).

Kabīr feels that he has parted with pride and egoism and became absorbed in, and one with, God :

O sovereign God, Thou art very fearless;
Thou art a raft to save the world, O God.
When I was proud, Thou *wert* not *in me*;
now that Thou art *in me* I am not proud.
Now Thou and I have become one;
seeing that we are both one, my mind is satisfied.
When there is *worldly* wisdom, how can there be
spiritual strength ?
Now I have *spiritual* wisdom, but not bodily strength.
Saith Kabīr, God hath taken away my *worldly* wisdom,
and instead of it I have obtained perfection
(*Ādi Granth, Gauṛi* 72).

We have already discussed how at the highest stage of his spiritual journey a mystic completely loses his sense of temporal existence and instead feels himself so much absorbed and united with God that he finds no distinction between himself and God. It was in such an ecstatic stage of his spiritual life that Manṣūr Hallāj uttered : "Anā al-Ḥaqq" (I am the Ḥaqq or God). In these verses, Kabīr appears to have experienced the same exeprience. According to the orthodox view of God, this kind of utterance is an open heresy. But being under a totally different situation, Kabīr did not suffer the fate of Hallāj (cf. *supra*, pp. 39-42).

In another place Kabīr expresses his being one with God :

When a stream is lost in the Ganges,
It becometh as the Ganges itself (cf. *Bṛ. Up.* 2.4.11);
Kabīr is similarly lost *in God* by invoking Him;
I have become as the True One and need not go elsewhere.
The perfume of the sandal is communicated to other trees;
They then become as the sandal itself.

... ...

So Kabīr having met the saints,
Hath become as God (*Ādi Granth, Bhairo* 5).

As we can see, this whole poem has the flavour of the Upaniṣadic immanent theory of creation. According to this theory, everything emanates from Brahman, and eventually everything gets reabsorbed in Brahman Which is described as *Tajjalān* (cf. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 3.14.1).

Still in another place Kabīr describes his union with God in terms of a wedding ceremony :

I turned my body into a dyer's vat and
then dyed my heart therein; [71]
the five virtues I made my marriage guests;
With God I made my marriage circumambulations,[72]
my soul being dyed with His *love*
Sing, sing, ye brideswomen, the marriage song :[73]
The sovereign God hath come to my house as my husband.
I made the bridal pavilion in the lotus of my heart,
and divine knowledge the recitation of my lineage;[74]

71. Kabir presents himself as a bride and God the Bridegroom. It is probably usual on occasions of marriage for people in some regions of India to have their clothes dyed. To be sure, in both Hindu and Muslim marriages colourful clothes are used, or white dresses sprayed with colours are used. Similarly, both bride's and bridegroom's hands and faces are also dyed either with henna or with other stuff. These are all Hindu customs; but in India the Muslims adopted them under the influence of Hinduism.

72. According to Hindu custom, the bride and bridegroom circumambulate the fire, in some places seven times and in other places four times, on the occasion of marriage. Before the circumambulation, the officiating priest ties together the scarves of the bride and the bridegroom. In fact, the circumambulation is the final confirmation of the marriage. So far I know, this particular Hindu custom is not usually seen in Muslim marriages.

73. On the occasion of marriage a few women get together and sing songs appropriate to the occasion. Some of these songs depict bride's departure from her father's home. These songs are so touching that they bring many listners into tears. This Hindu custom has been taken over by the Indian Muslims and is practised almost universally in the Indian sub-continent. In some parts of Bengal, the practice goes to the extent of hiring some women, particularly the eunuchs, for singing for the whole night.

74. It is called *Uchār*, or *Gotrācār*, a panegyric on the families of the bride and bridegroom intoned by the ministering Brāhman. A similar panegyric (*khuṭbah*) is recited in Muslim marriages, but in that no reference is made to the families of the marrying couple. It is composed of a few Qur'ānic verses in praise of God for enabling them to get married, and His grace is sought so that the marrying couple may be able to lead a happy and prosperous conjugal life.

I obtained God as my bridegroom
so great hath been my good fortune.
Demigods, men, saints, and the thirty-three korors
of gods in their chariots came as spectators.
Saith Kabīr, the one God, the Divine Male,
hath wed and taken me with Him
(*Ādi Granth*, *Āsā* 24; also cf. *Āsā* 25, 30).

It is interesting to note in these verses that Kabīr's whole understanding of marriage is essentially Hindu. Although he himself was married as a member of a Muslim family, but there is no allusion to the kind of marriages usually found in Muslim society. The reason is not known; probably there was no marked difference between Hindu marriage and the marriage in vogue among the poor Muslims of North India of those days, particularly those Muslims recently converted. At any rate, Kabīr's description of his divine marriage is fascinating. Before him, Nammālvār expressed his passionate spirituality in terms of husband and wife's relation. But the mysticism of love expressed in the verses of Kabīr surpassed all previous expressions. Thus in the following lines Kabīr tells us explicitly that God's love for him and his love for God has saved him:

My dread of transmigration is at an end
Since God displayed His love for me.
The light hath dawned, the darkness is dispelled;
I have obtained the jewel of God by meditation on Him.
When *He conferreth* happiness sorrow fleeth away;
The jewel of my heart is absorbed in God's love.
Whatever occurreth is according to Thy will, *O God*;
He who understandeth this shall be easily absorbed in *Thee*.
Saith Kabīr, all my sins have been blotted out,
And my soul is absorbed in the Life of the world
(*Ādi Granth*, *Prabhāti* 1).

In another place Kabīr expresses his great satisfaction on feeling that he had obtained salvation :

The sovereign God hath now become my helper;
Having cut away birth and death I have
obtained the supreme state.
God hath united me with the guild of the saints,
And freed me from the five deadly sins.

The ambrosial name I repeat with my tongue;
God hath made me His unbought slave.
The True Guru did me a favour
By rescuing me from the ocean of the world.
I have begun to love God's lotus feet,
And God ever and ever dwelleth in my heart.
The sparks of the fire of worldly love have
become extinguished,
And my mind hath obtained resignation by
the support of the Name.
In sea and land the Lord God is fully contained;
Wherever I look, there is the Searcher of hearts.
It is He Himself who implanteth His service *in my heart*;
God is obtained, my brethren, according to primal destiny.
The man to whom He showeth favour succeedeth
in his affairs.
Kabīr's Lord is the Chreisher of the poor
(*Ādi Granth, Gauṛi* 40).

KABĪR'S CONCEPT OF POVERTY

Once united with God, that is, salvation is achieved, Kabīr rejects the need for worldly riches, feeling that he already has the greatest wealth of all — the presence of God within himself. Hence he says:

Lay up for yourselves the wealth of God's name,
which fire will not burn, which hot winds will not dry up,
And which thieves will not approach;
that wealth shall never depart.
My wealth is God, the Supporter of the earth;
He is the real wealth.
Shiva and the four sons of Brahmā in their search
for this wealth abandoned the world.

. . . . . .

Saith Kabīr, O you who are intoxicated with wealth,
reflect in your hearts and understand this.
In your mansions are hundreds of thousands and
millions of horses and elephants;
in mine is the One God (*Ādi Granth, Gauṛi* 58).

Naked thou camest and naked shalt thou depart:
None shall remain -- *not even* kings or rulers.
I have the sovereign God as my nine treasures;
Thou hast the love of property, women, and wealth;
But they did not come with thee, nor shall they go with thee.
What availeth thee to have elephants tied at thy gate ?
The fortress of Ceylon was made of gold,
But what did the fool Rāwan take with him ?
Saith Kabīr, meditate some good acts :
The gambler shall depart with empty hands
(*Ādi Granth, Bhairo* 2).

Then in a true mystical fashion Kabīr describes the nature of poverty and richness. Who is poor ? Kabīr replies :

Nobody respecteth the poor man;
He may make hundreds of thousands of efforts,
but no one will heed him.
If a poor man go to a rich man,
The latter, though opposite him, will turn his back.
If a rich man go to a poor man,
The latter respecteth, *yea*, inviteth him;
Yet the poor man and the rich man are brothers:—
God's design cannot be set aside.
Saith Kabīr, it is he who is poor,
In whose heart the Name abideth not (*Ādi Granth, Bhairo* 8).

Finally, Kabīr expresses his satisfaction for the fact that he has God's name as his sole property:

The name of God is my wealth;
I cannot tie it in a knot, or sell it for my livelihood.
The Name is my field, the Name is my garden;
I Thy slave, *O God*, perform Thy service and seek
Thy protection.
Thy name is my wealth, Thy name my capital;
I know none but Thee.
Thy name is my kindred, Thy name my brethren,
Thy name my associates, who will assist me at the
last moment.
Saith Kabīr, I am a slave to him
Whom *God* keepeth in the world, but *who is* indifferent to it
(*Ādi Granth, Bhairo* 1).

In the last lines, Kabīr has reminded us that famous mystical theory of non-attachment to the world, yet to live in the world until the physical death. "Indifference to the world" while still living in the world is also a famous teaching of the *Gitā*. This attitude to the world is a universal mystical teaching.

KABIR'S CONCEPT OF JĪVAN-MUKTI

Finally, Kabīr seems to have been familiar with the Hindu concept of *jivan-mukti* (achieving *mokṣa* during one's lifetime), and he says in no uncertain words that he was a *jivan-mukta*:

Since my attention is fixed on God, I no longer
suspect that I shall suffer transmigration;
Even in life I am absorbed in the Infinite;
the guru's instruction hath awakened me.
The sound which is produced from bronze
blendeth again with it;
When the bronze is broken, O Pandit,
where will the sound be ?[75]
At the union of the three breaths *in the brain*
I have seen Him who is awake in every heart,
And now such understanding hath entered my heart
that I have abandoned *the world*.
When I knew myself, my light was blended with God's light—
Saith Kabīr, I now know *God* and my mind is satisfied
(*Ādi Granth, Bilāwal* 11).

In the following verses Kabīr describes the conditions of those who have obtained salvation during life :

They who abandon praise as well as blame,
who reject honour as well as dishonour,
Who consider iron and gold the same,
are the image of God —
Few, *O Lord*, are Thy servants !
They who abandon lust, wrath, covetousness,
and worldly love behold God's feet.
What are called the qualities of impulse, ignorance,
and goodness are all contained in Thy Māyā.

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75. Of the left and right nostrils and their junction. *Trikuli sandhi* also includes *gyatā*, the knower; *gyān*, the means of knowledge; and *gyeya*, the subject of knowledge. Devout men endeavour to unite all three.

Only they who understand the fourth degree,[76]
have obtained the supreme position;
They never entertain love for pilgrimages, fasting,
or for the religious ceremonies, purifications,
and austerities of *the superstitious*.
By meditating on God, avarice, worldly love,
and doubt depart;
The darkness (ignorance) of the mansion (heart) in
which the lamp *of divine knowledge* burneth is dispelled;
Its owner abideth completely fearless,
and his doubts have fled;
saith Kabīr, I am his slave (*Ādi Granth, Kedāra* 1).

So far we have discussed the essential teaching of Kabīr. His essential teaching set the stage for the other aspect of his teaching, that is, his role as the uniter of the Hindus and the Muslims. But he could not construct a new path or road which could be followed by the two communities equally without cutting clear the old jungle in his way. He could not advocate a new spirituality — a synthesis of the two religions — for them unless he could turn their attention from the externalism of the religions to the pure inwardness of spiritual life. It may be mentioned here that there are indications both in the Upaniṣads and the Qur'ān that mere outward ceremonies are of no use for spiritual progress. For instance, referring to the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, ch. 1. 12 (A Satire on Priestly Ritual), Dr. Radhakrishnan says: "This section is a satirical protest agaist the externalism of the sacrificial creed, in the interest of an inward spiritual life."[77] Similarly, referring to the prayers, in which the Muslims turn their faces towards the *Ka'ba* (to the

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76. By "fourth degree", Kabīr seems to have alluded to the Upaniṣadic theory of four states of knowing the Self (*Brahman*). According to this theory, there are four states, viz., the waking, the sleeping, the dreamless and the *turya*. At this state or stage, the individual self completely realises the Universal Self. In other words, in the *turya* state the individual self or soul (*ātman*) gets united with the Universal Self (*Brahman*). Or, it may refer to the four degrees of salvation, namely, *sālokya* (heaven); *sāmīpya* (being near God); *sārūpya* (assuming God's form); and *sāyujya* (being absorbed in God), which Kabir mentions in *Ādī Granth*, *Mārū* 5.

77. PUR, 358.

East or the West or to other two directions), the Qur'ān says clearly that "It is not piety, that you turn your faces to the East and to the West. But true piety is this : to believe in God, . . . " (2.177). Kabīr, therefore, attacked fearlessly the externalia of both Hinduism and Islām which obscured the truth of religion and kept the two communities of India far from each other in the name of religion. For rejecting and denouncing the outward rites and observances of the two religions, Kabīr used his satirical and allegorical style.

In passing, it may be mentioned here that we have seen in the previous section that in his utterances Kabīr is not only unsystematic, but there are also many repetitions of the same idea. The reason for such repetitions may have been that what Kabīr thought right he repeated time and again; or he expressed the same idea to different persons in different words, or the different reporters narrate the same idea in different words. That means, some of his ideas that we have already met in connection with his essential teaching, will be met again in this section.

KABĪR'S ATTITUDE TO HINDUISM

Turning to the Hindus, Kabīr asked them to give up what Hinduism had been practising for centuries, such as ceremonies, sacrifice, lust for magical powers, image and temple worship, repetition of *mantras*, pilgrimages, fasts, innumerable gods and goddesses, bathing in the holy waters, religious monopoly of the Brāhmans, caste differences, prejudices concerning touchability and food, penances and asceticism and yoga, and sectarianism. He unequivocally condemned the doctrine of incarnation (*Avatāra*). Let us now illustrate these rejections and condemnations in his own words. Below is a satire which he directed against asceticism and other Hindu rituals :

SATIRE ON HINDU RITUALS AND ASCETICISM

If union with God be obtained by going about naked,
All the deer of the forest shall be saved.
What mattereth it whether man goeth naked
or weareth a deerskin,

If he recognises not God in his heart ?
If perfection be obtained by shaving the head,
Why should not sheep obtain salvation ?
If, O brethren, the continent man is saved,
Why should not a eunuch obtain the supreme reward ?
Saith Kabīr, hear, O my brethren,
Who hath obtained salvation without God's name ?
(*Ādi Granth, Gauṛi* 4)

Kabīr, like most Ṣūfīs, and unlike many Hindu mystics, could not approve of ascetic life. As we know, he did not see any incompatibility between spiritual and temporal life. His life as a weaver, who wove cloth and sold it in the market to earn his daily bread, is a vivid example of what is known in Islamic tradition "the combination of trade and mysticism." It appears that during his times there were numerous Hindu yogi-ascetics and Muslim *faqirs* to whom Kabīr directed the following condemnation :

How many wear the bark of trees as clothes,
but what availeth it to dwell in the forest ?
What availeth it to man to offer incense *to idols* ?
What to drench his body with ablutions ?
O my soul, I know that thou shalt depart;
O silly one, think of thy fall.
Wheresoever I look, I see none but those who
are entangled in worldly love;
Men of divine knowledge and meditation, great
preachers are all *engrossed* in this world's affairs.
Saith Kabīr, without the name of the one God this
world is blinded *by* mammon (*Ādi Granth, Gauṛi* 67).
Some have men's locks and hang the black cord
on their necks,
And pride themselves on the practice of yoga.
What credit is there in causing your seat to fly ?
Crow and kite also circle in the air (*Bījak Ramaiṇi* 71).

Sitting on the air, studying yoga, Vedas, rites and
astrology, they are demented...
Kabīr says, the hope of the Yogi and the Jangama (ascetic)
is withered (*Bījak, Śabda* 26).

Kabīr was famous not only for his satires, but also for his witticism. It is said that there were many occasions when his *guru*, Rāmānanda, had to bow before his (Kabīr) ingenuity. One of the many interesting anecdotes is as follows : Once Rāmānanda wanted cow's milk to perform a *pūjā* (ritual). He sent Kabīr to bring it. Kabīr went and placed the vessel near a cow which had died and started piling up grass for her to eat. Hours passed and the cow did not oblige. Then Rāmānanda sent some of his disciples to find out. They went back and reported the curious activity in which they had seen Kabīr engaged. On his return, Kabīr explained: "O Saint, I thought perhaps a dead cow's milk would be more suitable for the dead ancestors. Unfortunately she does not even eat grass, let alone give any milk." "But surely you know that a dead cow will not eat grass ?" Rāmānanda asked. "But then," replied Kabīr, "If a recently dead cow cannot take nourishment, how can your ancestors, so long dead, drink the milk you want to give them?" The Swāmī had no answer.[78]

The story may or may not be true. However, it does give an idea of the sort of notion that people had of Kabīr. His logic was unique and his wit was sharp. In his denunciation of Hindu and Muslim religious practices, he used his peculiar style and his care-free manner. He made use of his witty remarks to expose the hypocrisy that had permeated both Hinduism and Islām.

ANT -YOGA-AND-YOGI SATIRES

Of all the Indian religious teachers, Kabīr was probably the first and only teacher who rejected the efficacy of Yoga. After Patañjali's yoga system, all Indian religio-philosophical systems, both orthodox and heterodox, such as Buddhism and Jainism, adopted yoga, although often different from that of Patañjali as a spiritual discipline. Even some Ṣūfīs who found a great similarity between their *muraqabah* (silent concentration) and yogic posture adopted yoga discipline, and for that reason many

78. See Tiwāri, P., *National Biography Series*: *Kabīr*, New Delhi, 1967, p. 11.

yogis were attracted to those Ṣūfīs as we have noticed before. But Kabīr openly denounced the yogīs and the yoga system. Thus he says :

The Yogī says: yoga is best of all;
O brother, it has no rival;
Yogīs with plaited hair or shaven head,
with sealed lips or matted locks —
where did these find wisdom ? (*Bijak*, *Śabda* 38).

The Yogī says that yoga and nothing else is good and sweet;
They who shave their bodies, and the Ekshabdis,
say that they *alone* have obtained perfection.
Without God thou art lost in error, O blind one.
They to whom I go to release myself,
are themselves bound by many toils (*Ādi Granth*, *Gauṛi* 51).

Thou dependest on a club, earrings, and patched coat;
In error thou wanderest in a *Jogi's* garb.
Put away thy devotional attitudes and thy suspension of breath;
Abandon deception, and ever worship God, O fool.
The wealth thou beggest for, the three worlds have enjoyed.
Saith Kabīr, God is the *only* Jogī in the world (*Ādi Granth*, *Bilāwal* 8).

It is stated that a Yogī maintained that deliverance could not be obtained without chastening the heart, and that the heart could not be chastened without the practice of yoga. Kabīr criticises this view and affirms that it is the truly pious and devoted persons and not the yogīs or ascetics who shall be saved:

Without devotion the qualities of the heart cling to the heart.
Who secureth perfection by *merely* chastening his heart ?
What holy man *hath succeeded* in chastening his heart ?
Say who hath saved any one by *merely* chastening his heart.
Every one thinketh in his heart that he is *going to chasten it*,
But the heart is not chastened without devotion.
Saith Kabīr, let him who knoweth this secret,
Worship in his heart God,
the Lord of the three worlds (*Ādī Granth*, *Gauṛī* 28).

When I turned my thoughts towards God,
I restrained my mind and my senses,
and my attention became lovingly fixed on Him.
O Bairagi, search for Him who neither cometh nor goeth, who neither dieth nor is born.

... ...

By the favour of the guru I have *now* obtained a different understanding; otherwise I should become estranged from God.
What was near hath become distant, what was distant hath become near for him who accepteth God as He is.

... ...

O Thou devoid of qualities, is there any discriminating person to whom I may speak of Thee ?
Saith Kabir, only he who applieth the spiritual fuse seeth the blast (*Ādi Granth, Gauṛi* 47).

ANTI-BATHING AND PILGRIMAGE SATIRES

Kabīr uttered strong words against the bathing in sacred rivers like the Ganges and making pilgrimage there:

They who bathe in the evening and the morning,
Are like frogs in the water.
When men have no love for God's name,
They shall all go to the god of death.
They who love their purāṇs and deck themselves out in various guises,
Feel not mercy even in their dreams.

... ...
... ...

Saith Kabīr, why perform so many ceremonies ?
Forsaking all other essences quaff the great essence *of God's name* (*Ādi Granth, Gauṛi* 5).
He who is foul within will not go to heaven by bathing at a place of pilgrimage:
Nothing is gained by pleasing men;
God is not a simpleton.
Worship the Lord, the only God;
Serving the guru is the true ablution.

If salvation be obtained by bathing in water,
the frogs which are continually bathing *will obtain it*;
But as the frogs so the pilgrims;
they shall be born again and again.
... ...
... ...
Where there is neither day nor night,
Veds nor Shāstars, there dwelleth the Formless One.
Saith Kabīr, meditate on Him,
ye foolish denizens of the world (*Ādi Granth*, *Āsā* 3 *i*).
There is nothing but water at the holy
bathing places; and I know that they are useless,
for I have bathed in them (*Tagore*, poem 42).

In thy heart is deception, in thy mouth religion;
False man, why churnest thou water ?
What advantage is it to bathe the body
If there be filth in the heart ?
If the gourd be washed at the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage,
Even then its bitterness will not depart.
Thus saith Kabīr deliberately—
Cause me to cross over the terrible ocean, O God
(*Ādi Granth*, *Soraṭha* 8).

IDOLATRY DENOUNCED

As regards idolatry, besides Kabīr, there were four other *bhaktas*, namely, Appar, Basava, Nāmdev and Nānak, who condemned it in clear language. The influence of Islām on these *bhaktas* has been suggested by all writers. Although the same influence has been suggested about Kabīr's *guru*, Rāmānanda, he does not seem to have denounced idolatry. However, Kabīr had no place for idolatry, for it seemed logical to him that, if God was one (and he believed in one God without any ambiguity), the whole basis of idolatry should perish. He was, therefore, absolutely clear and unsparing in his denunciation of the practice :

O mind, you make your gods and goddesses,
and kill living creatures to make
offerings to them (*Bijak Śabda* 70).

But if your gods are true, why do they not
take them when grazing in the fields ?[79]
The images are all lifeless, they cannot speak;
I know, for I have cried aloud to them (*Tagore*, poem 42).
Thou cuttest leaves, O flower-girl;
in every leaf there is life.
The stone for which you gatherest the leaves is lifeless.
Thou art in error, O flower-girl, in this;
The true Guru is a living God.
Brahmā is in the leaves, Viṣṇu in the branches,
and Śiva in the flowers.
Thou destroyest three gods [according to your own belief] in
our presence;
Whom dost thou worship ?
The *sculptor* carving the stone turned it into an idol;
and, *in doing so*, put his foot upon its breast.
If it were a real God, it would have destroyed him.
Men cook rice, dāl, lapasi, pancakes, kasar ;[80]
The Brāhman feasters feast on these things,
and put ashes into the idol's mouth.
The flower-girl is in error, and leadeth
the world astray, but I go not astray.
Saith Kabīr, God hath mercifully preserved me
from error (*Ādi Granth*, *Āśā* 14).
Men make goddesses and gods of clay,
and offer them living sacrifices —
As your lifeless gods, so your deceased,
who ask not for what they want themselves.
You kill living things, and you worship lifeless things;
at the last moment (Last Day : The Day of Judgment)
great *shall be your suffering*.
You know not the worth of God's name, and you
shall be drowned *in the sea* of terror.
You waver and know not the supreme God,
wherefore you worship gods and goddesses.

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79. Cited by Keay, p. 73.

80. "Dāl" means lentil; "Lapasi" and "Kasār" are both made from clarified butter, flour, and sugar, but the former is made liquid by the addition of water. They are both Indian puddings.

Saith Kabīr, you have not thought of the Unknowable,
and have become entangled in the deadly sins
(*Ādi Granth, Gauṛi and Soraṭha* 45).
O shameless man, art thou not ashamed ?
Why dost thou forsake God, and go to someone
else (to worship idols) ?
It becometh not him whose God is the Most High
To go to a strange temple.
That Lord pervadeth *all space.*
Is ever present, and never distant.
Say, O man, what is there not in His palace.
... ...
Every one speaketh of Him :
He is omnipotent, our own Lord, and our Benefactor.
Saith Kabīr, that man is perfect in the world,
In whose heart no other than God abideth (*Ādi Granth, Gauṛi and Soraṭha* 38).

If by worshipping stones one can find God,
I shall worship a mountain:
better than these stones (idols) are the
stones of the flour mill with which men
grind their corn.[81]
If God dwell only in the mosque,
to whom belongeth the rest of the country ?
They who are called Hindus *say* that God
dwelleth in an idol :
I see not the truth in either sect (*Ādi Granth, Prabhāti* 2).

The following hymn, which is a homily against idolatry, is said to have been composed by Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru of Sikhism, from a theme of Kabīr :

Vain is his devotion,
Who saith a stone is God.
Idle shall be his labour
Who falleth at the feet of a stone.
My God always speaketh;
He bestoweth gifts on all living things.
He who is blind knoweth not God who is within him;
He is led away by superstition, and entangleth others.

81. Cited by Westcott, p. 37.

A stone speaketh not, nor bestoweth gifts:
Vain are the ceremonies *of idolaters* and fruitless their service.
... ...
... ...
Saith Kabīr, I proclaim with à loud voice —
Understand me, ye infidels and pagans;
The love of other *gods* hath destroyed many homes,
The saints of God are ever happy (*Ādi Granth, Bhairo* 12)
For the sake of bathing, there are many Tīrthas,
O foolish mind; for the sake of worshipping
there are many idols,
Kabīr says, no emancipation is thus obtained,
emancipation is in the service of Hari.[82]

SECTARIANISM CONDEMNED

But Kabīr's condemnation did not stop at idolatry. He denounced uncompromisingly even practices like the carrying of the rosary and the using of sectarian marks by the Śaivites and the Vaiṣṇavites. Thus he says :

You *wear* tilaks on your foreheads,
carry rosaries in your hands, and *put on sectarial* dress:
People think that God is a plaything—
If I am mad, *O God*, I am still Thine.
... ...
I gather no leaves and I worship no idol;
Without devotion to God *other* worship is fruitless.
I worship the *True Guru*,
and ever and ever propitiate Him (*Ādi Granth, Bhairo* 6).

In another place Kabīr addresses the saints and complains about all the useless things that the Hindus were doing. In this passage he not only discarded all rituals and ceremonies, he denounced even the incarnation and the Vedas :

O Saints, the world has gone mad;
If I tell the truth, it comes down
upon me to kill me, but believes a lie.
I have seen the devout and the pious
who regularly bathe in the mornings.

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82. *Ibid.*

They forsake God and worship stones;
in them there is not wisdom . . . .
They have commenced to worship brass
and stones and are proud of their pilgrims.
They wear garlands, caps and frontal marks
and chapps on their arms, and engage in singing
the praises of their gods; they have forsaken God.
The beads are of wood, the gods of stone, the
Ganges and the Jumna are water. Rāma and Kṛṣṇa
are dead. The four Vedas are fictitious stories.[83]

CASTE SYSTEM REJECTED

In his crusade against everything that was meaningless and unreal, Kabīr naturally uttered strong denunciatory words against the caste system. It has been acknowledged unanimously that the strongest indication of Islamic influence on Indian thought is the rejection of idolatry and caste system by some Indian mystics, such as Appar, Basava, Nāmdev, Rāmānanda, Nānak and Kabīr. But unlike some *bhaktas*, Kabīr rejected the caste system for both religious and social reasons. It is in this sense that Kabīr is regarded as the revolutioniser of medieval Indian religion and society. And for that contribution W.W. Hunter has compared him with Luther. Kabīr simply could not tolerate the division and distinction between man and man or between Hindu and Muslim. He rose above the sectarian divisions that separated men—in this case Hindus and the Muslims — and, believing as he did in one God, sought to make men realise they were all one family in Him. The simple formula, in accordance with which Kabīr tried to fulfil his mission of uniting the Hindus and the Muslims by bringing them into the fold of one religion or spirituality, is that of One God (cf. Q. 2.163; ch. 112. etc.), one humanity (cf. Q. 2.213) and thus one religion — a well-known theory of Islām. Therefore, it follows since there is one God, one humanity and one religion (i.e. to submit and surrender to the will of God) we must not

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83. *Ibid.*

be divided but remain united. This is the Islāmic theory of the unity of the believers (Q. 3. 103). All submitters are brothers. Thus Kabīr says :

Adam who was first, did not know
Whence came mother Eve.
Then there was no Turk (Muslim) nor Hindu; . . .
Then there was no race, nor caste.
If thou thinkest the Maker distinguished castes :
Birth is according to these penalties for deeds.
Born a Śūdra, you die a Śūdra;
It is only in this world of illusion that you assume the sacred thread.
If birth from a Brāhman mother makes you Brāhman,
Why did you not come by another way ?
If birth from a Turk makes you Turk,
Why were you not circumcised in the womb ?
If you milk black and yellow cows together,
Will you be able to distinguish their milk (*Bijak*, *Ramainī* 62).
Saith Kabīr, renounce family, caste and lineage;
become an ant, and thou canst pick up
and eat *the sugar* (*Ādi Granth*, *Rāmkalī* 12).

As we see, Kabīr's sayings discarding caste distinctions are considered to be the most prolific and poetic. He urges us to forget our sense of distinctions between man and man and become humble like an ant. And thus he was the most successful religious teacher and reformer in this matter as long as he was alive. But after his death, his followers reverted from his ideals, as we shall see later.

There are other verses which Kabīr directed against the Brāhmans themselves who consider impurity and caste defilement in almost everything. The Brāhmans censured Kabīr for not having due attention to caste rules. Thus Kabīr says :

There is impurity in water, there is impurity in land,
there is impurity in whatever is born.
There is impurity in birth, and again in death;
God's subjects are ruined by this impurity.
O Pandit, tell me who is pure;

Explain to me such knowledge *as thou hast on the*
subject, my friend.
There is impurity in the eyes, there is impurity in the tongue,
there is impurity in the ears;
Standing or sitting there is impurity,
impurity entereth the kitchen.
Every one knoweth how to be caught *in impurity*,
but few how to escape from it.
Saith Kabīr, no impurity attacheth to those who
meditate on God in their hearts (*Ādi Granth*, *Gauṛi* 41).

Again :

Thy mother was impure, thy father was also impure,
and impure is the fruit they have borne.
The unlucky people came impure, they departed
and died impure.
Tell me, O Pandit, what place is pure
Where I may sit and take my food.
My tongue is impure, what it saith is impure,
the ears and eyes are all impure.
The impurity of the senses departeth not,
O thou who art burning with Brahmanical wrath.
Fire is also impure, water is impure, and impure the place
where thou sittest and cookest it.
With an impure ladle it is served up, and impure are those
who sit and eat it
Impure thy cow-dung, impure thy cooking-square,
and impure the lines which mark it out.
Saith Kabīr, that man is pure who hath obtained
true knowledge (*Ādi Granth*, *Basant* 7).

There are many stories told about Kabīr's confrontation with the Brāhmans on the question of the caste. One of these stories is told with regard to Kamālī, Kabīr's daughter. It is stated that when she was twenty years of age, she was one day drawing water from a well. A Brāhman named Har Deva, asked for a drink, but was afterwards horrified to know that he had taken water from a weaver's daughter. The matter was referred to Kabīr. The Brāhman complained that the girl had defiled his caste. On that Kabīr replied as follows :

O Pandit, think, when thou drinkest water.
In the mud-dwelling, wherein thou sittest,
the universe is contained :
Where fifty-six *kotis*[84] of Yadavas perished,
eighty-eight thousand men and *munis* :
At every step prophets are buried, they decayed
to dust therein.
Fish, tortoise, and crocodile there gave birth,
the water is filled with blood.
The water of the river flows in through its channels;
men and cattle dissolved in it.
The bones are dissolved and the marrow melted;
how else comes the milk ?
Thou, O Pandit, thou didst sit down to drink;
yet the earthen pot thou accountest defiled.
Renounce the Vedas and the Book, O Pandit;
all these are fictions of the mind.
Kabīr says, Hear, O Pandit; these are
your pious deeds (*Bijak*, *Śabda* 47).

The Brāhman is said to have fallen at the feet of Kabīr and begged his forgiveness and to be received by him as his disciple. Kabīr accepted him, and Kamālī was given to him in marriage.[85]

INCARNATION DENOUNCED

Allusion has already been made to Kabīr's denunciation of the doctrine of incarnation. Elsewhere he gives an elaborate account of this point. Thus he says :

The Creator did not marry Śītā nor did he make
a stone bridge across the waters (*Bijak*, *Śabda* 8).
They say the Lord of the world finding
inequalities of the weak and the strong came as Rāma.
But Kabīr says, before such a one (Rāma) who took birth and died. I cannot bend my head.[86]

Again he says :

The ten incarnations that people talk about do not concern

84. A "Koṭi" is ten millions. The Yādavas were the tribesmen of Kṛṣṇa.
85. Cf. Keay, pp. 16-17.
86. Quoted by Tara Chand, p. 163.

me, they are merely the reapers of the fruits of their actions, but the Creator in some one else.[87]

In another place a homily of Kabīr is found against Kṛṣṇa worship :

Nand (the adoptive father of Kṛṣṇa) became weary
wandering through the wombs of the eighty-four lakhs (hundred thousand) of existences;
Through his devotion *Kṛṣṇa* became incarnate;
great was the poor man's good fortune.
You who say that *God* was the son of Nand,
whose son was Nand ?
When the earth and the firmament and the ten quarters of the world were not,
then where was this Nand ?
He whose name is the Bright One falleth not into trouble, and undergoeth not birth
Kabīr's Master is such a Lord as hath neither father nor mother (*Ādi Granth, Gauṛi* 70).

Still in another place Kabīr says :

Follow the true *Ṣāḥib* (God) who will uphold you in all your trials.
He was not born in Daśaratha's family and did not oppress the king of Laṅkā (Ceylon).
Jasodā did not fondle him in her lap and he did not enter the womb of Devakī.
He did not fight with king Bali nor did he kill Hiraṇyākṣa, throwing him down on the ground.
He did not assume the form of a boar nor did he destroy the kshatriyas.
He did not hold the Gobardhana on the tip of his fingers nor did he remain in the jungle with the milkmaids (of Mathura and Brindaban).
He is neither *Śālagrama*, nor any other stones he is not fish, nor tortoise, dwellers in the water.
He died not at Dwārawati nor was his corpse buried at Jagannath.

87. *Ibid.*

Kabīr proclaims, 'let none follow such teachings;
he whom they believe to be of gross and material elements
is of subtle principles.'[88]

It is interesting to note how thoroughly Kabīr was acquainted with the stories of the incarnations of Viṣṇu, especially with the two human incarnations, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa. By telling the stories connected with the lives of these two human incarnations, Kabīr has certainly shown his personal knowledge of them, and unmistakably he has rejected the idea of incarnation.

SATĪ REJECTED

Kabīr concerned himself not only with the matters of religion simple and pure, but also with those social evils which the Hindus used to practise in the name of religion. One such superstition which obtained wide currency in the Hindu society of those days was the practice of *Sati*, i.e. burning of a widow on the byre of her deceased husband. Kabīr rejects the idea of salvation by *sati*, and condemns the practice in the following words:

How can a woman without chastity be a satī?
O pandit, see and consider this in thy heart.
If a woman have no love *for her husband*,
how can *her husband's* love for her increase?
As long as there is *worldly* love,
there can be no *divine* love.
He who in his heart believeth mammon to be real,
Shall not even in his dreams meet God.
Kabīr calleth her a happy wife,
Who giveth up to God her body, soul, wealth,
and household (*Ādi Granth*, *Gauṛī* 23).

ANTI-BRĀHMAN SATIRES

However, by denouncing Hindu religious rites and practices which he thought were useless and not meaningful for spiritual progress, and thus unnecessary for realising God, Kabīr was not satisfied. He then directed the fury of his criticism against the

88. Quoted by Westcott, pp. 38-39; also see V. No. 64 in Westcott.

Brāhmans, the priest class which, according to Kabīr, was responsible for misleading the people by encouraging them to practise all those superstitious practices and ceremonies in the name of religion. There are passages in which Kabīr expressed his view to the effect that the Brāhmans were cheaters of the people whom they deceived by posing as the pioneers and guardians of religion. They fill their stomachs with people's money. Instead of feeding the Brāhmans, Kabīr suggested that food and money should be given to those poor but pious and sincere devotees of God, whom the Brāhmans despise for being low-caste.

There is no doubt that during the medieval period the power and prestige of the Brāhmans was undisputedly great. The whole land was under the authority of priestcraft and sacerdotalism. Brāhmanism, invigorated by its triumph over Buddhism, established its authority over all, until the Muslims invaded the country and gradually extended their influence throughout India, particularly in northern India. But when the influence of Islām began to spread through the length and breadth of the country, especially in the form of Ṣūfīsm, and large number of Hindus who found the Muslims and their religion were different from their religion and the pandits, were getting converted to Islām, the Brāhmans in order to counter this new religious threat tightened the rope of their orthodoxy and began to become more and more dogmatic and narrowminded.[89] This was contrary to the usual catholicism of Hinduism which absorbed all other religions that came to India before Islām. Like Hindu orthodoxy, the Islamic orthodoxy also tried to maintain its separate indentity. However, the initial stage of the conflict between the two orthodox systems was followed by a softening of attitude to each other which facilitated assimilation and interaction between the two religions.[90] But before the two orthodoxies could come to any understanding, the mystics of the two systems had already gone far ahead in their process of assimilation and interaction.

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89. Cf. *Hinduism*, p. 137; RQIIT, 138; Ranade, R. D., ERRSR, 245

90. See Humāyūn Kabir,CHIB, 583; Macnicol, N., LRIP, 134 referred to T. W. Arnold, ERE, VIII, 859.

However, whatever efforts Hindu and Muslim orthodoxies may have made to come close to each other, they certainly could not afford to go to the extent that the mystics of the two religions had gone. In other words, while the assimilative efforts on the part of the two orthodox systems touched only the periphery of each religion, the effort on the mystical level involved more than mere surface; it entailed even the fundamentals of religion. Thus for making encroachments on the jurisdiction of orthodox religion, both Hinduism and Islām were opposed to the mystics and saints. "The latitudinarianism, freedom of thought, and intense self-exertion in intellectual and spiritual spheres," says R. C. Majumdar, "which characterized the saints, undoubtedly generated in them a spirit of revolt and criticism, and no wonder that in spite of a frank recognition of their greatness, they or their followers were not always accorded a place within the orthodox fold."[91] So, orthodoxy was opposed to the mystics from the very beginning.

Kabīr was, by far, the most revolutionary and courageous of all Indian mystics. By his clear denunciation of the ceremonial practices of Hinduism, he undoubtedly incurred the displeasure of the Brāhmans. In their turn, they opposed Kabīr tooth and nail. Moreover, in teaching and preaching his own doctrines, Kabīr was actually running counter to the prestige and influence of the Brāhmans. There are many references to this in Kabīr's verses. They seem constantly to have taunted him with his low caste, but Kabīr reproaches them in return for their ignorance of the spiritual truth and their failure to show the path of salvation. Thus he says:

Why shouldst thou, O Brāhman, forget Him
from whose mouth the Veds and the Gāyatrī issued?
Why shouldst not thou, O Pandit, utter the name
of God, whose feet every one toucheth?
O my Brāhman, why not repeat God's name?
If thou utter not His name, O Pandit,
thou shalt be cast into hell.

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91. HCIP, VI, 548-49.

Thou *callest* thyself exalted, yet thou eatest
in the houses of the low, and fillest thy belly
by the exaction of alms.
On the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the half
month thou devisest tales and beggest,
but even with a lamp in thy hand thou shalt
fall into the pit.
Thou art a Brāhman, I am a weaver of Banaras;
how can I be a match for thee?
By repeating the name of God I have been saved,
while thou, O Pandit, shalt be lost by
trusting to the Veds (*Ādi Granth, Rāmkali* 5).

Further he speaks:

Pandits have gone astray reading and studying the Vedas;
they do not know the secret of their own selves.
Their evening and morning prayers,
their six modes of worship,
And many things like these they consider virtuous deeds.
They made the Gāyatrī (a Sanskrit mantra) to be
recited in all four ages;
Go and ask them who has thus found salvation;
If touched by another you wash your body;
But tell me, who is meaner than you?
These are your good deeds, yet you are
consumed with pride;
From such pride no one will derive any benefit.
He whose Name 'is the breaker of pride';
How can He tolerate your pride?
They who give up pride of race and attachment
and search for the Word alone,
Renouncing the shoot and seed of all desire,
these men became freed from body
and from space (*Bījak, Rmaini* 35).
They wear loin-cloths (dhotī) three and half yards
long and sacrificial threads of three strands;
They carry rosaries on their necks and glittering
brass utensils in their hands;
They should not be called saints of God,
but cheats of Banaras —

Such saints are not pleasing to me —
They gulp down trees with their branches;
They scrub their vessels, and put them on fires
whose wood hath been washed;
They dig up the earth, make two fire-places,
and eat up men whole!
Those sinners ever wander in evil deeds,
yet they call themselves Aparas.
Ever and ever they wander about in their pride
and ruin all their families.
Man is attached to what *God* hath attached him,
and his acts correspond.
Saith Kabīr, he who meeteth the true guru shall not
be born again (*Ādi Granth*, *Āsā* 2).

It appears that Kabīr was not opposed to the name Brāhman *per se*, rather, his opposition was to a class of people who call themselves Brāhmans without deserving it. According to him, the name Brāhman should only be applied to a holy man who meditates on God:

While dwelling in the womb man hath not family or caste;
All men have sprung from the seed of Brahm [*sic*].
Say, O Pandit, since when hast thou been a Brāhman;
If thou art a Brāhman born of a Brāhmanī mother,
Why has thou not come by some other way ?[92]
How art thou a Brāhman ? How am I a Śūdra [*sic*]?
How am I of blood and you of milk (i.e. superior) ?
Saith Kabīr, only he who meditateth on God
Is a Brāhman in my estimation (*Ādi Granth*, *Gauṛī* 7).

ANIMAL SACRIFICE DENOUNCED

Kabīr very strongly held the doctrine of *ahiṁsā* which made him particularly angry at the sacrifice of animals in worship or

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92. Kabīr seems to have been acquainted with the story of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, of the *Ṛg-Veda* X, 90, that the four castes have sprung from the four parts of the Puruṣa, the Brāhman being the superior to all others, came out of Puruṣa's mouth. The Kṣatriya from the arms; the Vaiśya from the thighs and the Śūdra from the feet of the Puruṣa. Kabīr questions why they were born of woman ?

rituals by both Hindus and Muslims. It may be recollected that in his boyhood when Kabīr rebuked a Mullāh for slaughtering an animal the Brāhmans felt delighted and were pleased with him.[93] But now he berates a Brāhman for offering animal sacrifice to an idol:

O Pandit, what folly meditatest thou ?
Thou shalt be ruined with all thy family
for not having repeated God's *name*,
O luckless man.
What availeth thee to read the Veds and the Purāṇs ?
It is like loading a donkey with sandal
whose perfume he valueth not.
Thou knowest not how *to repeat* God's name;
how shalt thou be saved ?
Thou takest life and deemest it religious;
tell me, my brother, what thou callest irreligious.
Thou makest thyself out an excellent muni;
Whom callest thou a butcher ?
Mentally blind thou knowest not thyself;
What shalt thou cause others to know ?
Thou sellest knowledge for money, thy life passeth in vain.
Narad and Vyas declare — and thou mayest go and
ask Śukdev also—
Saith Kabīr, *too*, by uttering the name of God
ye shall be delivered; otherwise ye shall
perish, my brethren (*Ādi Granth*, *Mārū* 1).

KABĪR'S ATTITUDE TO ISLĀM

Turning to the subject of Kabīr's attitude to Islām and its doctrines, it may be emphasised that although the whole of his thought is deeply tinged with ideas he has absorbed from Hinduism, his acquaintance with Islamic teachings, customs and ideals was far from superficial. He mentions the Qur'ān, the prayer, the fasting of the month of Ramāḍān, the pilgrimage to Mecca, etc. He must have been also acquainted with some contents of the Qur'ān, which he values along with the Vedas, the reading of which, according to his opinion, profits

93. Cf. *supra*, p. 170-71

the Muslims as little as does the reading of the Vedas the Hindus. His family used to sacrifice animals on the occasion of *Baqra 'Īd*. However familiar Kabīr may have been with the Islamic system, it is certain he could not have any relationship with the orthodox section of the contemporary Indian Muslims. It would have been a case of partiality and hypocrisy if he had a cordial relationship with Islamic orthodoxy while rejecting orthodox Hinduism relentlessly. We have tried to stress that Kabīr was above all sectarianism, and his criticism of the two religions was equally severe.

As regards his relationship with Ṣūfīsm, there cannot be any doubt that whatever knowledge of Islām he acquired, it was from Ṣūfism. We have discussed this subject before at some length. It will suffice here to re-emphasise that besides Shaykh Taqī, about whom we have learned a lot, Kabīr must have been closely associated with many other Ṣūfīs and *Pirs* who were in and around Banares and all over northern India. There is clear evidence that Kabīr was associated with a group of saints whom he addresses very often, and many of them must have been Ṣūfīs.

As for the Ṣūfī teachings, we have also tried to demonstrate in what ways Ṣūfīsm differs from orthodox Islām. There is complete unanimity among all writers that there is a good deal of similarity between Ṣūfī teachings and Kabīr's. In fact, it was the Islamic or Ṣūfī influence which prompted Kabīr, like Nāmdev, Appar, Basava and others, to denounce some fundamental principles of Hinduism, such as idolatry, doctrine of incarnation, caste distinction, and profess a strict monotheism. However, there is no indication that Kabīr had any deep knowledge of Muslim theology and religious philosophy. The naïveté of his acquaintance with the Islamic system can be measured from his pronunciation of some of the Islamic terms, such as "*mismil*" instead of "*Bi-ism Allāh*" (with the name of God).

Although Kabīr, like the Ṣūfīs, conceived of an immanent God who dwells in the human heart rather than in heaven, and with whom man can have a relationship of love (*bhakti*) and affection; and his ideas are similar to those of the Ṣūfīs, such as the concepts of *Fanā and Baqa dhikr*, need for the guidance

of a *guru* or *pīr*, neglect of religious duties, no regard for heaven or hell but only God's love, etc., yet Kabīr's teaching differs from that of the Ṣūfīs in some respects. For instance, by and large, the Ṣūfīs hold the doctrine of predestination (*Qadr*) : that God has destined men beforehand for salvation or damnation. In other words, God is the author of both good and evil. In Kabīr's system, on the other hand, are found evidences of both *Qadr* and *Karma*. Like Hinduism, he held firmly the doctrine of *Karma* and *Saṁsāra*, which means that man's destiny is the result of his own deeds, and he taught that all men, by following the right path of salvation, might obtain *mokṣa* (release) from *saṁsāra* (transmigration). Simultaneously, Kabīr based the foundation of his spirituality on the doctrine of *Prapatti* (self-surrender) to God which, of course, echoes the teaching of the *Gitā* (18. 65-66) as well as of Ṣūfīsm, in that Kabīr prescribes no religious duties save and except whole-hearted devotion (*bhakti*) to God as we have noticed before.

Besides this, unlike the Ṣūfīs, Kabīr does not appear to have recognised what is called the Ṣūfī stages (*maqāmāt*) in spiritual progress. Unlike Muslim and Hindu-Buddhist mystics, Kabīr rejected the practice of rosaries. Finally, Kabīr does not appear to have followed the Ṣūfī or Hindu custom of initating a disciple (*murid*, *celā*). Kabīr had nothing to do with any such formalism. Instead he welcomed whoever was willing to join his circle by accepting his ideas and ideals. It does not seem, therefore, that Kabīr even belonged to organised Ṣūfīsm, i.e. owing allegiance to any particular Ṣūfī order, though some writers contend that he belonged to a Ṣūfī order.[94] He was only one of those individuals who found Ṣūfīsm a better way to practise than *shari'at*. But, again, he did not accept everything about Ṣūfīsm, but only those ideals that he deemed apposite for his purpose of making a synthesis and a compromise with Hinduism. Thus Kabīr is considered as an eclectic mystic for his selection of some principles from both Hinduism and Islām.

At any rate, Kabīr came in conflict with the Mullāhs as he did with the Brāhmans, and he denounced them and their

94. See *supra*, pp. 180-81.

outward religious practices with equal severity, as he did in the case of Brāhmans and their religious observances. It is very important to remember that Kabīr had no soft heart for either religion. He was opposed to traditional Hindu as well as Muslim ideas and practices. Not only did he reject those traditional ceremonies and observances of both religions, he even rebuked the upholders of those ideas. Thus we can hardly wonder that the outspoken rebukes of Kabīr stirred up many enemies from both communities against him. And according to the legends, Hindus and Muslims joined together to harass and persecute him. With this background, it is not improbable that they made a combined appeal to the Sulṭān Sikandar Lūdhī in order to silence him.

It may be mentioned here that the first thing of Islām which Kabīr rejected even when he was a boy of five or six years of age, was circumcision.[95] Then he denounced the Muslim practice of sacrificing animals either for religious purposes or just for eating.[96] Let us illustrate his opposition to the Muslims and their religious observances :

MUSLIM CEREMONIES REJECTED

I have seen many pīrs and awliyās (saints) ;
they read the Book (the Qur'ān) ;
They initiate disciples and give instruction
in such knowledge as they have.
They sit them down (*asan mari*) full of vanity,
and in their mind is vain glory (*Bijak, Śabda* 4).
O Qāzī, what sort of deeds are thine ?
In every house thou orderest the slaughter of buffalos.
... ...
Thou knowest not piety, yet thou art called Pīr ;
Reading the verses thou teachest the world.
Says Kabīr, one was called *Sayyid* :[97]

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95. Cf. *supra*, pp. 168-69.

96. Cf. *supra*, pp. 170-71.

97. The *Sayyīds* claim to be the descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad. *Sayyīds* along with *Shaykhs*, *Mughals* and *Pathāns* are the four classes of Muslim aristocracy recognised in the Indian society during the Muslim rule in India.

Himself misled, he misleads the world.
They fast all day : at night they slaughter the cow.
Here murder, there devotion ;
how can this please God (*Bijak*, *Ramiani* 49).
If birth from a Turk-mother makes you a Turk,
Why were you not circumcised in the womb ? (*Bijak*, *Śabda* 4).
O Qāzī, nothing is done by *mere* talk;
It is not by fasting and repeating prayers and
the creed that one goeth to heaven.
The inner veil of the temple of Makka is in man's
heart, if *the truth* be known.
Just decisions should be thy prayers,
knowledge of God, the inscrutable One, thy creed,
The subjugation of thine evil passions the
spreading of the prayer-carpet ;
then shouldst thou know what religion is.
Recognize thy Master and fear Him in thy heart;
despise and destroy thy mental pride.
As thou deemest thyself so deem others,
then shalt thou become a partner in heaven.
Matter is one but hath assumed diverse shapes;
in the midst of all recognize God.
Saith Kabīr, thou hast abandoned heaven and
attached thyself to hell (*Ādi Granth*, *Āsā* 17).

Kabīr admonishes another *Qāḍi* :

Thou fastest to appease God,
yet thou destroyest life to please thy palate.
Thou regardest not others as thou dost thyself;
why pratest thou ?
O Qāzī, thy one God is in thee,
but thou beholdest Him not by thought and reflection.
Mad on religion, thou heedest not,
wherefore thy life is of no account.
Thy books tell thee that God is true,
and that He is neither male nor female ;
Thou gainest nothing by thy reading and study,
O madman, since thou regardest Him not at heart :
God is concealed in every heart ;
reflect on this in thy mind.

Kabīr loudly proclaimeth — there is the same God
for the Hindu as for the Muhammadan
(*Ādi Granth*, *Āsā* 29).

Apart from rebuking and criticising the Muslims as a whole, especially the class of Mullāhs and their religious observances, Kabīr appears to have had confrontations with individual *Mullāh* and *Qāḍi*. The following is an expostulation to a *Qāḍi*, probably attached to the royal court, who wished Kabīr to perform the usual Muslim fasts and ceremonies.

Hence Kabīr says :

I am God's poor slave, royal state is pleasing to thee ;
The Supreme God, the Lord of religions,
never ordained tyranny (*Ādi Granth*, *Āsā* 17).

According to a story, a Muslim *faqir* or *darwesh* named Jahāngaśt (traveller of the world), having heard of Kabīr, went to see him. Kabīr hearing of his coming, tied up a pig at his door. The *faqir*, seeing the pig, went away disgusted. But Kabīr called him back and said :

I have tied up what is unclean at my door,
but you have tied up what is unclean in
your heart. Anger, pride, avarice, etc.,
are unclean; and these are inside you.
what you think to be unclean is not
unclean; but anger is unclean.[98]

The *faqir* is said to have become a disciple of Kabīr. Kabīr had many confrontations with both Hindu and Muslim religious persons. It is amazing to note that on every occasion his enemies were convinced of his reasonings, and eventually they yielded to his superior intellect.

Some time in his life Kabīr appears to have contemplated a pilgrimage to Mecca; but later on he seems to have abandoned the idea. Thus he says :

Kabīr, I was going on a pilgrimage to the Kaabah,
I met God on the way ;
The Lord fell a-quarrelling with me,
'Who ordered thee to go to that place ?'
(*Ādi-Granth*, *Śloka* 197).

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98. Cited by Keay, p. 18.

There is no indication, however, in what period of his life, or in what stage of his religious experience, this occurred. If it was true, it must have been in the earlier stage of his spiritual life, for there are many verses in which he spoke against making pilgrimage to any place — Mecca or Kāśī, as we have already noticed above. In the following couplets Kabīr admonishes a Muslim religious man whom he thought was a hypocrite. This man appears to have advised Kabīr to make a pilgrimage (*ḥajj*) to Mecca:

Make thy mind thy Kaabah,
thy body its enclosing temple,
Conscience its prime teacher;
Then, O priest, call men to pray to that mosque which hath ten gates.[99]
Sacrifice wrath,[800] doubt, and malice;
Make patience thine utterance of the five prayers.
The Hindus and the Musalmāns have the same Lord;
What can the Mullā, what can the Shaikh do *for man*?
Saith Kabīr, I have become mad;
Stealing my mind away *from the world*
I have become blended with God (*Ādi Granth*, *Bhairo* 4).

Kabīr being a Ṣūfī of heretical nature, like Hallāj, Bistāmī, Ibn Aby'l Khayr, and others, it is not to be expected that he himself would go to Mecca or would commend it to any one who undertakes a journey to go on a pilgrimage. Ṣūfīs of his nature said that the *Ka'bah* comes to one who has absorbed himself in God's love; and he who has gone astray from the path of God,

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99. Evidently, the allusion is to our body. There are some songs, especially in Bengali, called *ma 'arfatī* (gnostic) in which reference is made to human body as a cage with nine gates (one mouth, two noses, two eyes, two ears, one rectum and one urinal or genital). But Kabir mentions "ten gates", the tenth gate may refer to either naval or to consciousness. If it is the latter, it will be in line with the Indian philosophical mode of dividing human body into different components.

100. According to the Islamic method of sacrificing of an animal, *Bismillāh-i-Allahu Akbar* (in the name of God Who is Great) must be uttered loudly. Kabir, being an unlettered person, could not pronounce it correctly; instead he pronounces it as "mismil"; and to this formula he makes allusion by calling it "sacrifice wrath."

goes to Mecca. For this reason *Ādi Granth, Ślok* 198 which describes Kabīr's pilgrimage to *Ka'bah* is considered unauthentic.

However, Kabīr's criticism of the *Mullāhs* and the *Qāḍis* should not delude us into thinking that he was opposed to them entirely. On the contrary, we find him giving his considered opinion of what a true *Mullāh* and *Qāḍi* ought to be, as he did in the case of the Brāhmans. Thus he says:

He is a Mullā who struggleth with his heart,[101]
Who by the instruction of the guru contendeth
with Death,[102]
And crusheth Death's pride.[103]
Salutation ever to that Mullā !
God is present; why describe Him as distant ?
If thou restrain *thy* pugnacity, thou shalt
obtain the Beautiful One.
He is a Qāzī who pondereth on his body,
Who burneth it with divine fire,
And alloweth not his seed to drop even in his dreams —
For such a Qāzī there is no old age or death —
He is an emperor (Sulṭān) who *knoweth how* to draw up his
two breaths,[104]
Who recalleth his mind when it goeth abroad, who collecteth
the army of breaths in his brain[105]—

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101. In Islamic tradition this is called "*jihād bi'l-nafs*" or "*jihād bi'l-qalb*" (striving with heart and soul in the way of God). For more information about *Jihād* (ordinarily translated as "War" or "Fighting"), cf. D. B. Macdonald, "Djihād", SEI, 89; Hedayetullah, M., SA, 88-89.

102. We have discussed Kabīr's opinion about death. His concept of death is in the vein of that of the Ṣūfīs. Accordingly, rememberance of death and contentment with physical death is a well-known mystic ideal in every religion. As against this, conquering the fear of spiritual death is the goal of all religion.

103. The theme of the story of Naciketas' confrontation with Yama (Death personified) is how to conquer the fear of death, i.e. spiritual death, which means to be united with God. In other words, a liberated soul is beyond the power of death. In this verse Kabīr hints at that secret which enables one to crush the power of death (cf. *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, 1.1.7-29 in Radhakrishnan, pp. 595-611).

104. "Two breaths" alludes to that mystical spiritual exercise which is done in the *murāqabā*. With the word "Allāh" the breath is taken in and with the word "Hu" the breath is given out.

105. This probably refers to *yoga* practice in which many breaths are involved.

Such a one is an emperor, and hath an umbrella over his head.
The Yogīs cry out 'Gorakh, Gorakh';
The Hindus repeat 'Rām, Rām';
The Musalmāns have Khudā (Urdu and persian word for God),
But Kabīr's God is the All-pervading (*Ādi Granth, Bhairo* 11).

KABĪR'S DENUNCIATION OF HINDU-MUSLIM RITES AND SCRIPTURES

In addition to the couplets in which Kabīr rebuked the Brāhmans and the Mullāhs separately, and denounced their religious observances, which in his opinion were mere forms and deceptions without any value for people's spiritual welfare, there are other verses in which he directs his language of rejection and denunciation towards the scriptures and rites of both religions. Kabīr took immense pains to explain his views concerning the scriptures of both religions. He does not seem to have disregarded these sacred literatures as such, but rather argued that they were misused and mis-understood by the so-called religious persons of both religions. Moreover, Kabīr could not like the superstitious regard that the *Mawlawis* and the *Pandits* showed to the religious literatures though they did not understand them. Thus he says:

Devotion, sacrifice and rosary, piety, pilgrimage,
fasting and alms.
Nine, bhakti, Vedas, the Books (Qur'ān)
all these are cloaks of falsehood.
One goes about with Śabdas, another
boasts his doings.
Ever they claim respect and renown —
both sects, Hindus and Turks (*Bījak, Śabda* 113).
Qāzī, what is this book that you discourse on?
You are jangling and wrangling always;
nothing of wisdom do you know.

... ...

Leave these distractions, meditate on Rāma,
O foolish mind! (*Bījak, Śabda* 84; also cf. *Śabda* 10).

The Musalmāns accept the Ṭarīqat;[106]
The Hindus the Veds and Purāṇs;
but for me the books of both religions are useless.
A man ought to study divine knowledge to some extent to instruct his heart (*Acrostic* 5).
The Purāṇa and the Korān are mere words;
lifting up the curtain, I have seen.
Kabīr gives utterance to the words of experience;
and he knows very well that all other things are untrue (*Tagore*, poem 42).
The Brāhmans *yearly* perform twenty-four *fasts*
on the eleventh *day of the dark and light halves of the lunar month*;
The Musalmāns fast in the month of Ramazān.
The latter put aside eleven months of the year,
and say that the Treasure is in one alone.
What availeth the Hindus to bathe *at Jagannath* in Urisa (Orissa), what *the Musalmāns* to bow their heads in a mosque?
With deception in their hearts they repeat prayers;
what availeth them to go on a pilgrimage to Makka? (*Ādi Granth, Prabhāti* 2).

Again:

Turning away *from the world* I have forgotten
both cast and lineage;
My weaving is *now* in the infinite silence (i.e. in the realms of God).
I have now no quarrel *with any one*;
I have given up both the Pandits and the Mullās.
I weave clothes and I wear them myself;
Where *I see* no pride (probably in the society of the saints),
there I sing God's *praises*.
What the Pandits and the Mullās prescribed for me,
I have received no *advantage* from,
and have abandoned.

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106. "*Ṭarīqat*" is the Ṣūfī "path" as against the "*Sharī'at*" of orthodox Islām. We have discussed the difference between them. Ṣūfī path is paralleled with the Buddhist Noble Path. Here it is clear that Kabīr rejected the *ṭarīqat* of the organised Ṣūfism as he did the *sharī'at* orthodox Islām.

My heart being pure (freed from the world),
I have seen the Lord;
Kabīr having searched and searched himself,
hath found God within him (*Ādi Granth*, *Bhairo* 7).

Further:

Say not that the Hindu and Musalmān books are false;
false is he who reflecteth not on them:
If you say that the one God is in everything,
then why kill fowls ?
O priest, say *is this* God's justice ?
Thy mental doubts forsake thee not;
Thou seizest and bringest living things,
and takest their lives,
but thou *merely* killest *their bodies* of clay.
Their souls return to the Indestructible;
say what hast thou killed.
What avail thy purifications,
thy rinsings of the mouth (Muslim practice of washing their mouth in ablution),
and thy prostration in the mosque ?
If thou pray with deception in thy heart,
what availeth thee thy pilgrimage to Makka ?
Thou are impure; thou knowest not the Pure One;
thou knowest not His secrets.
Saith Kabīr, thou hast missed heaven,
and art satisfied with hell (*Ādi Granth*, *Prabhātī* 4).

As we see, in these couplets Kabīr unmistakably denounced the religious people for their killing. One of the strongest indications of Hindu influence on him is his adherence to the doctrine of *ahiṁsā*. Under the same influence some Indian Ṣūfīs became very strict vegetarians.

Kabīr's rejection of killing, however, has brought forth another of his important concepts, namely, the animal's body and its relation to the soul. His idea is that an animal's body, like a man's, is only of clay which perishes, but the soul remains indestructible. At the end of the body, the soul goes back to God in a manner reminiscent of what we find in the Upaniṣads (cf. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, 4.2.4; *Chāndogya*, 3.14.1,4; 8.12. 1); in the *Gitā* (2.11, 17, 18, 19,20) and in the Qur'ān (2.28;

3.59;20.55). This is the great teaching which Prajāpati in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (ch. 8 sections 7-15 *passim*) taught Virocana and Indra on the distinction between the bodily self and the *ātman* (soul) which is of divine nature.

As we see from the nature of his teaching in this section, Kabīr wanted to clear up those artificial barriers which the two communities created in the name of religion, and by which the two communities separated themselves from each other. Kabīr wished to break down those barriers and preached a new piety acceptable to both Hindus and Muslims. In his intense desire to see the two communities united, Kabīr had to reject and denounce all those outward forms which the Hindus and the Muslims performed so scrupulously, but which he deemed to be valueless from the spiritual point of view.

We have discussed the two aspects of Kabīr's teachings in some details. It is clear that his influence was very great on the people of medieval India, especially in North India. "During the middle ages," commends Kshitimohan Sen, "there was in North India not a single movement for freedom, whether spiritual or intellectual, that did not bear the stamp of Kabīr's influence."[107] J. N. Farquhar gives a list of as many as eleven principal sects that sprang from the influence that Kabīr exercised by his life and by the songs that made his teaching widely known throughout North India. By far the most important of these sects was that of Nānak, the founder of Sikhism, one of the living religions of India of present time. All of these sects, Farquhar says, were at first monotheistic and non-idolatrous in their worship, recognised no caste distinctions and admitted to their circles both Hindus and Muslims. The drift towards Hinduism, however, soon started; incarnations were recognised and the worship of the *guru*, and even idolatry was established; and the formation of an order of priests, relaxation in moral and ethical regulations; and even the tendency to accept caste distinctions came in.[108] The Kabīrpanthīs not only split up into Hindu and Muslim camps, but also introduced all innova-

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107. "The Medieval Mystics of North India", in CHIB, IV, 379.

108. ORLI, 334-35; also see LRIP, 144-45; *Indian Theism*, p. 136; Archer p. 49.

tions mentioned above. A study of them, which falls outside the scope of this work, may be pursued separately.[109]

However, although these religious sects threw into oblivion the ideals of Kabīr, his idea of unity and concord between Hinduism and Islām found advocates in the royal court of the Indian Mughals. Emperor Akbar (r.1556-1605) sought to reconcile the two religions and went to the extent of founding an *'Ibādat Khānah* (House of Worship) in which representatives of all religions of India, particularly of Hinduism and of Islām were invited to take part in religious debate.[110] Prince Dārā Shikoh, the author of *Majma 'al-Baḥrayn* (Combination or Meeting of the Two Rivers), which simply indicates his aim, strove to achieve Hindu-Muslim harmony.[111] Had he succeeded to the Mughal throne of India, the subsequent history of the Indian sub-continent would have been different from what we see now.[112] There is no doubt that these personages of the royal family were the products of that trend which Kabīr set in motion not too long befere their time.

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109. See Keay, chs. vi, vii, viii, ix; Westcott, pp. 66 ff.; ORLI, 335-36.

110. Cf. *Hinduism*, p. 137; also see Sharma, S. R., *The Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperor*, 2nd ed., New York, [1962]; V.A . Smith, "Akbar's 'House of Worship', or 'Ibādat-khana", RAS, XL (1917), 715-22.

111. Cf. Roma Chaudhury, *A Critical Study of Dārā Shikuh's Samudra-sangam : An Indo-Islāmic Synthetic Philosophy*, Calcutta, 1954, 2 Vols.

112. See Arberry, A. J., RRI, 113-14.

CONCLUSION

As has been shown, the history of the interaction of Hindu-Muslim ideas can be traced back as early as the seventh century of the Christian Era. We have also noted that some contacts between Indian mysticism and Ṣūfīsm had been made even outside India, in Central Asia. The ideas of Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī and Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj testify to this fact. The literary and commercial contacts between India and the Muslim world can also be traced to the seventh and the eighth centuries. These facts we have tried to establish may be recalled in context.

I

In India, the coming of the Arab trader-missionaries to the South and South-western coasts of India inaugurated the long process of the interaction and assimilation of ideas, manners and customs between the Hindus and the Muslims. The Muslim traders were patronised by Hindu Rājahs, who allowed the former to carry on missionary work along with their commerce. As a result of these Muslim trader-missionaries' proselytising activity, a large number of Hindus were converted to Islām. Apart from them, many mixed sects and tribes arose in South India, such as the Mophlas, the Labbes, the Nawāits, the Ravuttans, the Dūdekulas, and others. The presence of a large number of Muslims and their preaching and teaching created an atmosphere of understanding and harmony between the two communities. Eventually intermarriages took place between them.

After the Muslim conquest of Sindh in the early eighth century, the first Muslim ruler, Muḥammad bin Qāsim, took necessary steps in order to accommodate the Hindus within Muslim rule. His recognition of the Hindus as *Dhimmīs*, and his putting a ban on killing of the cows may be considered as very important concessions granted to the Hindus. The administrative measures taken by the Muslim rulers of India were designed to facilitate understanding and amity between the two

communities. Those measures eventually led to the creation of an atmosphere of friendship and concord, as against the initial stage of apathy and prejudice between the conquerors and the conquered. Evidently, some kind of interaction and assimilation took place between the two communities even on the orthodox level.

II

However, since in India Islām was preached and spread primarily by the Ṣūfīs, the serious type of interaction between the two faiths took place on the mystical level, more specifically on the non-orthodox mystical level. On this level of interaction and assimilation some of the fundamental principles of both religions were touched and modified. Hindu and Muslim mystics did not differentiate between Hindu and Muslim in accepting disciples. Likewise, both Hindus and Muslims accepted the mystics of both religions as their *gurus* or *pirs* indiscriminately. Many Ṣūfīs adopted some elements of Yoga while many yogīs attached themselves to the circles of the Ṣūfīs. In short, the interaction between the mystics of the two religions gave a new dimension to the religious life of India. Religion was conceived as something above the sectarian level. The universal characteristics of religion were nourished by the mystics, as a result the religious gap between the Hindus and the Muslims was narrowed to a great extent at least on this level.

III

Further, Ṣūfīsm found in Hindu *bhakti* mysticism a congenial ground for establishing closer relationship, and initiating processes of integration and even fusion. Although the fundamental ideas of *bhakti* mysticism are Indian in origin, it appears that they could not have become popular among the Indian masses due to the strong Brāhmanic influence on the then Indian society. But the Ṣūfīs who believed in similar ideas, gave a fresh impetus to those Indian ideas after their arrival in India. The first contact between Ṣūfīsm and *bhakti* mysticism was made in South India after the arrival of those Muslim

trader-missionaries of whom mention has already been made. The liberal attitudes which the Muslim missionaries adopted towards Islām as well as towarts Hinduism reflected in their teachings. It is highly probable that due to the similarity between the Ṣūfī teachings and the ideas of *bhakti* mysticism, the former attracted the attention of some Hindu mystics of the Tamil land of the South India. Thus Ṣūfī teachings, it has been suggested, gave an incentive to those Hindu ideas and stimulated them; as a result the spiritual instinct of those Hindu mystics was awakened. This contact opened the chapter of the interaction and assimilation between them; and it engendered the rise of the *bhakti* mysticism in the form of a movement — a mass movement of devotional religion at first in South India then eventually it swept through the whole of India. And during the medieval period it remained the most dominant religion of the Indian people.

IV

In the teachings of some South Indian *bhakti*-mystics such as Appar, Māṇikka Vāchakar, Basava, Nammālvār, Nāmdev, and others, on whom the possible influence of Ṣūfīsm has been suggested, are found the elements of Ṣūfīsm and *bhakti* mysticism fused and mingled together. Some of them, it is also argued, due to the preponderance of Ṣūfī influence on them, rejected almost everything of Hindu tradition and culture, such as caste distinctions, idolatry, bathing ritual, pilgrimage, etc., and thus made a significant break with Hinduism. The cases of Appar, Basava and Nāmdev are representative in this respect. They betrayed the strongest Ṣūfī influence on them.

V

In North India and Bengal the Ṣūfī influence was much stronger than it was in the South. The Ṣūfīs who had settled in these regions and preached Islām were more influential than those of the South. The interaction between the two faiths was more widespread in these areas. Guru Nānak of the Punjāb and Śrī Chaitanya of Bengal can be regarded as the best examples produced by the interaction.

However, the person who brought the movement of *bhakti* mysticism from the South to the North was the great bhakti-mystic, Rāmānanda. During his residence in Banares, he is said to have had regular religious debates with both Hindu and Muslim mystics. He is reported to have been an open advocate of the fusion of Hinduism and Islām. Notwithstanding his unflinching fidelity to Hindu tradition, he admitted to his religious circle disciples from every strata of the society. But the person who is regarded as the best product of the interaction of Hindu-Muslim ideas, on the one hand, and the first true representative of Hindu-Muslim unity and fusion, on the other, was Kabīr, one of the disciples of Rāmānanda.

VI

There are many legends about the birth and naming of Kabīr. In all probability, he appears to have been an illegitimate son, probably of a Hindu woman, adopted by a Muslim weaver family of Banares. Muslim legends tried to attach special significance to his name, Kabīr. From his very boyhood, Kabīr showed the signs of religious sensitivity. The quest for religious truth was innate in him. Very early in his life, he expressed his disapproval of Hindu as well as Muslim religious rites and ceremonies. Although Kabīr was an adopted son of a Muslim weaver, yet he never identified himself as a Muslim ; instead he called himself "a weaver of Banares" To be sure, he had no ground to identify himself as a Hindu. This is the most profound secret of Kabīr's life and teaching, that from the beginning he kept himself above denominations. He considered himself a man created by God, who is one without any partner and sharer in His omnipotence. Therefore, it will not be in the spirit of Kabīr to categorise him either as a Hindu or as a Muslim. At best we can say that he was a Muslim only by his upbringing and by name. However, mere upbringing or a mere name does not make one a true member of a particular religious system — Islām or Hinduism. It is the adherence which one professes to a particular system by performing its rites and duties that makes one a follower of that system. In the case of Kabīr we have no evidence to show that he ever

adhered to formal Islām. The fact remains that in his make-up two streams — Hinduism and Islām — mingled together. Thus the crucial point to remember in the case of Kabīr is the fact that throughout his life he kept himself away from the sectarian division of Hinduism and Islām. He was neither a Hindu nor a Muslim exclusively, rather a blend of both. But it was puzzling for orthodox Hindus as well as for orthodox Muslims. They opposed him and even despised him for speaking against their established religious systems and age-old traditions. The complexity of Kabīr's life and teaching led to a quarrel after his death even among his Hindu and Muslim disciples, each party wanting to own his body exclusively. However, no solution was found which could keep the two communities of India united for which Kabīr worked so hard.

VII

Kabīr is widely regarded as one of the most outstanding religious figures of medieval India. He was a reformer and a versatile preacher of religious truth. He is universally recognised as a unique person. He was mystically oriented from his early life. Mysticism appears to have been an inborn element in his nature. It is the mystical inclination of Kabīr which helped him to see one God, one humanity and one religion as the facts of the world and our life therein. The inherent mystical quality of Kabīr helped him to regard religion as a matter of personal experience; it is based on the purity of heart, and a wholehearted devotion to God with a sense of absolute surrender and obedience to His grace and mercy. At some stage of his life, Kabīr seems to have undergone a mystical experience like all great mystics and prophets. He heard the Divine Word (*Śabda*), which caused spiritual awakening in him. This spiritual awakening opened his heart to God and he established a direct relationship with God. Having achieved a direct relation with God, Kabīr set himself to the concrete investigation of the religious problems of India. This was an enormous task. In the course of his search for religious truth, Kabīr preached the essential doctrines of religious truth. He

came to realise that Hinduism and Islām are essentially the same and true. In other words, according to Kabīr, religion is characterised by catholicity and universality. Since religion is universal it is applicable to every individual without any distinction of race and nationality. Thus, Kabīr refused to accept the view that there could be divisions among human beings, such as Hindus and Muslims, on the basis of religion. Therefore, in his efforts to find a common religious ground for the Muslims and the Hindus, Kabīr tried to combine monotheism with monism. This was a great contribution which Kabīr made to the religious life of India. However, by propagating and advocating the essential truth of Hinduism and Islām, Kabīr certainly did not attach himself to either religion as far as the orthodox category was concerned. Rather, by discovering the religious truth which was veiled and cloaked by the outward ceremonies of both these religions, Kabīr wanted to unite the two communities for the quest of salvation. The most significant underlying aspect of this attempt on the part of Kabīr was to resolve the historical tension prevailing in the major religious communities of India — Hindus and the Muslims — in the name of religion. In his attempt to achieve this goal, Kabīr overtly disregarded all external formalisms of both religions as something useless for spiritual progress in the true sense. For denouncing the observances and rites of both religions, Kabīr used his satirical style which is unique. Thus, Kabīr preached a new spirituality or piety by which he wished to unify the religious communities of India separated from each other for centuries.

VIII

However, by rejecting some aspects of both Hinduism and Islām, Kabīr did not put himself outside the fold of Hindu or Islamic tradition completely. He remained part of each. In fact, he became the pioneer of a common Indo-Islamic tradition. He only wanted to break down by open denunciation all the artificial barriers which were created by the two communities in the name of religion, and which prevented them from

mingling together. And on the ruins of those age-old formal religions, Kabīr wanted to evolve a new spirituality, primarily based on *bhakti*, acceptable and practicable equally for both Hindus and the Muslims. But it will be incorrect to maintain that Kabīr despised either Hinduism or Islām or both as such. For, in addition to the religious propensity which appears to have been innate in him, he also closely associated himself with both Hindu and Muslim mystics and deeply imbibed their teachings. Of these saints, the names of two outstanding personalities have been unmistakably mentioned in all records. They were Rāmānanda and Shaykh Taqī. The ideas of these holy men gave further impetus to Kabīr's religious impulses. Thus, it is fairly clear that Kabīr's ideas were moulded by the interaction of Hindu-Muslim ideas as he absorbed them from the saints of the two faiths. In spite of the fact that Kabīr imbued himself with mystical ideas of the two religions, he demonstrated an uncompromising attitude to both Hinduism and Islām. From the Islamic point of view, by no means Kabīr can be regarded as a Ṣūfī belonging to any organised Ṣūfī order of India. He can at best be regarded as an individual Ṣūfī of heterodox tendencies. He, thus, can be compared with Bāyzīd Bistāmī and Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj, rather than Mu'īn-ud-Dīn Chishtī and Nizām-ud-Dīn Awliyā. And from the Hindu side he can be likened with *bhakti*-mystics like Basava, Nāmdev and Rāmānanda; and certainly not with Rāmānuja and Śaṅkara. It was a unique character of Kabīr's teachings that he showed no regard for orthodox or traditional religions — theological or mystical. And in this respect Kabīr occupied a position different even from that taken by his *guru* Rāmānanda and *pir* Shaykh Taqī, both of whom had inclination towards traditional form of religions. In Kabīr's teaching, we find elements, drawn from both Ṣūfīsm and *bhakti* mysticism, blended together in a manner unknown in the religious history of India before.

IX

Some modern scholars, such as Professor 'Azīz Aḥmad, regard Kabīr as a mere eclectic and syncretist. It is argued that

Kabīr rejected most elements of both Hinduism and Islām and accepted a few elements from both religions. Apparently Kabīr was a syncretist. But if we dive deep into the essential teaching of Kabīr and try to balance it with the Hindu and Muslim religious elements that he rejected, we will find that Kabīr did not mean to be a mere syncretist. But he was the pioneer of a different kind of religious universalism under a given situation with a different objective. For example, Kabīr denounced the efficacy of all rituals, ceremonies, rites and observances of both Hinduism and Islām without showing any preference or favour whatsoever to either religion, for the two religions put too much emphasis on the externals of religion in disregard to the pure inwardness of spirituality. Moreover, in the assemblies of pilgrims and other places of festivals, corruptions of diverse nature in the name of religion have crept into the life of the people. Kabīr also rejected the validity and the usefulness of the scriptures of both religions, precisely because they were misused and misrepresented by the so-called guardians of both religions, namely, the Brāhmans and the Mullāhs. Otherwise, there is evidence to show that Kabīr regarded the essential validity and truth of religious scriptures. Similarly, Kābīr openly rejected the position and status claimed by the Hindu and Muslim religious personages, not because of their titles but because of their ignorance about the truth of religion. In fact, Kabīr held these self-styled religious people responsible not only for their own ignorance about the essence of religion, but also for misleading the innocent people in the name of religion. Kabīr also accused those Brāhmans and Mullāhs for having created an iron wall between the two communities in the name of religion, and having not only kept them far away from each other, but also for involving them in vain quarrels in the name of religion. Kabīr also expressed his opinion as to who should be called a Brāhman and a Mullāh. Kabīr legitimately questioned the origin of the names like Hindu and Muslim. He maintained that God did not create people differently; that is to say, by birth no one was circumcised to be designated as a Muslim; nor was one born with the so-called sacred thread to be called a Brāhman. The fundamental point to be noted here is that Kabīr tried to impress

with very thoughtful arguments that there could not be any distinction between man and man on the ground of religion and its symbols, for God has not created Father Adam and Mother Eve as Hindu and Muslim, rather only as human beings. Thus, under the spell of Ṣūfī influence, Kabīr denounced unequivocally the concept of two peoples, namely, Hindu and Muslim, as well as the caste distinctions within Hinduism itself.

X

Kabir's quest for salvation was not merely theoretical but also based on his personal experience. However, theory and personal experience merged completely in his teaching. In this respect Kabīr is regarded as a great religious figure. For synthesising not only the elements of two religions, but also the theory and personal experience, Kabīr proved himself as a unique religious reformer and preacher. He called upon the Hindus and the Muslims to worship One Supreme God, Allāh or Rāma. Kabīr persistently emphasised that the name of the God is only a linguistic device, but the truth remains that there is only One God, who is omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent. Correlative to this concept of God, Kabīr rejected the Hindu practice of idol-worship as well as the Hindu idea that worship of God could be done only in a temple and Muslim practice of offering prayers to God only in a mosque. According to Kabīr, it is futile to try to keep God confined to temple or mosque, or to go to some particular places, such as Kāśī and Mecca, on a pilgrimage and worship God there. As against these practices of Hinduism and Islām, Kabīr in a truly mystical vein boldly declared that God exists everywhere, particularly in the human heart.

In contradistinction to Hindu-Muslim religious rites and practices, which Kabīr denounced as useless and thus had no value for spiritual progress, he declared that the purity of a heart was the essentially necessary element for worshipping God and thus for achieving salvation. And by worship Kabīr meant nothing but the whole-hearted *bhakti* to be directed to

One Supreme God with a sense of absolute surrender (*prapatti*, or *aslamā*) and trust and dependence (*tawakkul*) on God's mercy and care. In his essential doctrines, Kabīr fused the elements drawn from both Hinduism and Islām. In a true mystical fashion he urged the Hindus and Muslims not to attach themselves to the love of this world which he compared to a deceiving woman. The love for the world (*Māyā*) binds us continuously to *saṁsāric* life. In order to achieve *mokṣa* or *najāt*, Kabīr tells us, we should remember (*dhikr*) God all the time, and get the guidance (*hidāyat*) of a true *guru* or *pir*. In his essential teaching, Kabīr laid down the doctrines by following which one can obtain salvation. And salvation, tc Kabīr as with all mystics, is a union with God and to live with Him eternally.

XI

Taking into consideration all the important elements that are found in the essential teachings of Kabīr, it can be concluded that he developed his ideas consequent to his being influenced by both Hindu mysticism of the *bhakti* type and Ṣūfīsm of heterodox nature, apart from the catholicism that was innate in him. His ideas were the combination of Hindu and Muslim ideas. Thus, Kabīr's life and thought represent a significant new development in comparative religion in which he brought to the consciousness of mankind a truth about religion which they had forgotten by practising excessively the outward rites of religion. Kabīr was the true product of the interaction of Hinduism and Islām. He was the pioneer of Hindu and Muslim unity. The type of teaching he preached amply fits his objective. Hence he said :

Kabīr is a child of Rāma and Allāh,
and accepteth all gurus and pīrs.

This is one of the reasons why the study of Kabīr's life and teaching is so fascinating.

Despite all odds and difficulties which Kabīr faced in achieving his life-mission, he was quite successful during his life time.

His teaching was appealing and influential as can be assessed from the number of sects which arose under his influence. After his death, although in some quarters his ideas fell into abuse, the impetus of his teaching continued for a long time and found in other quarters appropriate advocates who tried to implement the ideas of Kabīr.

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